

**STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AT GATEWAY
INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED (KENYA)**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION,
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OCTOBER 2015

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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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank the Almighty God for giving me life, good health and sound mind. I would also like to acknowledge the tireless effort of my supervisor Dr. John Yabs for always being there to guide me through my research period giving me invaluable advice on this research project.

To my classmates who were always there encouraging me forward in my research project i.e. Paul, Patrick and Pauline may the Almighty God bless you richly.

To all respondents who were there to answer my constant barrage of questions I greatly appreciate.

For everyone who made this project report a success I am truly grateful, may you all be blessed beyond measure.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents Mr. Hassan Jumba and Mrs. Robai Kanaiza for their belief in me throughout my life and their continued support in my life, May God Bless you richly.

ABSTRACT

Companies need to have effective strategies in order to cope with today's ever changing environment. Strategic management process is divided into three phases/segments, that is, formulation, implementation and control. The main critical phase of strategic management process is the implementation stage, (translating strategic thought into organizational action). Strategy implementation is concerned with how the choices will be put into effect and how to manage changes required in the process. Strategy implementation therefore is a crucial phase because it unites the organization between formulation and evaluation. Strategy formulation, important as it may be, needs to be followed by proper strategy execution; otherwise, the strategy formulated will not be realized. With the accelerating dynamics of competition, the key to competitiveness no longer lies in employing strategies, which have been successful in the past or in emulating strategies of successful competitors. Real competitive advantage results from developing strategies that will differentiate the organization from its competitors in the eyes of the customers. This study analyzed the strategy implementation procedure of Gateway insurance company Kenya, and the challenges it incurred when implementing the strategies. Gateway Insurance Company began transacting business in Kenya in 1982. Today it has a total of fifteen branches nationwide and many general insurance products to satisfy the needs of its target customers. Over the years, the company has been implementing various strategies to cope with the harsh competitive environment in order to survive. The study unraveled the various implementation procedures, citing its strengths and weaknesses, the study utilized a case study design in which an interview guide was used on five senior managers of the company based in Nairobi County. Qualitative analysis on the data was done using content analysis. The study found out that there needs to be integration of strategy in accordance with the core competencies of an organization putting into perspective the various changing trends in market forces. Thus if strategy puts the above into consideration with good top down communication then most definitely successful implementation would be achieved. Currently most insurance companies have implied their course in implementation of their strategic plans and thus this study should act as a bench mark in the industry for results and quality assurance across the sector. This will thereby promote comparability of challenges among the insurance companies in Kenya and particularly during implementation of their respective strategic plans.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMREF	African Medical and Research Foundation
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IRA	Insurance Regulatory Authority
SWOT	Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
PESTEL	Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural, Technological, Environmental, Legal

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Managing the implementation and execution of strategy is easily the most demanding and time-consuming part of the strategic management process. Good strategy execution entails that managers pay careful attention to how key internal business processes are performed and see to it that employees' efforts are directed toward the accomplishment of desired operational outcomes. The task of implementing and executing the strategy also necessitates an ongoing analysis of the efficiency and effectiveness of a company's internal activities and a managerial awareness of new technological developments that might improve business processes (Robinson & Pearce, 2007). This also applies to the insurance industries especially with the present fast changing environment which proves to be challenging to all business industries at large, thus calling for effective strategy formulation and implementation. In other words, strategy implementation is the process in which an agreed strategy is put into action. Thompson *et al* (2005) puts forward that a well formulated strategy and effective implementation of the said strategy will result in effective and good management.

For effective strategy implementation, the organization should have the ability to develop dynamic capabilities that will enable it in pursuing emerging opportunities and implementation of its strategies (Winter 2003); the organization's management should be well versed with the turbulent environment and design structures that will fit with the

changing environment for their strategies to be successfully implemented. The management should create an environment that connects employees to the organization's mission and vision.

The main participants in the Kenyan insurance industry are: insurance companies, reinsurance companies, insurance brokers, insurance agents and finally the risk managers.

The statute regulating the industry is the Insurance Act; Laws of Kenya, Chapter 487.

The insurance industry in Kenya is currently experiencing fast growth which has brought about unprecedented competition in the industry. Strategy implementation would have to be tailored to different situations and circumstances under which each insurance company operates.

1.1.1 Concept of Strategy

A strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a particular goal. Strategy embraces the overall purpose of an organization. It is the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out those goals. Thomson and Strickland (2003), observe that strategies are at ends and these ends concern the purpose and objectives of the organization. They are the things that organizations do, the paths they follow and the decisions they take in order to reach certain points or level of success. Strategy can also be defined as a plan, a direction, a guide or course of action into the future and as a pattern that is consistent in behavior over time (Mintzberg, 1994).

Johnson and Scholes (2002), add that strategy entails a process of converting the formulated strategies into viable operations that yield the organization's targeted results.

They add that strategy is the direction and scope of an organization over the long term, which achieves advantage for the organization through its configuration of resources within a changing environment and fulfills stakeholders` expectations. Strategy is a unifying theme that gives coherence and direction to the actions and decisions of an individual or organization.

According to Winter (2003), Strategic plans deal with the futurity of current decisions. It also looks at the alternative courses of action that are open in the future; and when choices are made among the alternatives they become the basis for making current decisions. An effective strategic plan starts with strategic objectives. Objectives indicate what management expects to accomplish, while planning sets forth how, when, where and by whom the objectives will be attained. Therefore, a strategic plan is concerned with decisions that have enduring effects that are difficult to reverse. Strategic planning is long-range planning. In general strategic planning is concerned with the longest period of time worth considering.

1.1.2 Strategy Implementation

Ansoff (1999) describes implementation as the execution of tactics both internally and externally so that the organization moves in the desired strategic direction. Thus, implementation is the process of translating strategic plans and policies into results. Although the literature on strategy implementation is growing, it is not so well developed as the literature on strategy formulation.

Strategy formulation and implementation is an on-going, never-ending integrated process requiring continuous reassessment and reformation. Pearce and Robinson (2007) states that to effectively direct and control the use of the firm's resources, mechanisms such as organizational structure, information systems, leadership styles, assignment of key managers, budgeting, rewards and control systems are essential strategy implementation ingredients.

Further, strategy implementation is within the framework of an environment which is by largely unpredictable, many organizations are forced to become more flexible and adaptive to change. A greater use of strategic planning tools for internal and external analysis would certainly facilitate improved organizational learning and enhance strategic thinking even while following an emergent approach. However, according to Mintzberg (1998), empirical research discounts this, highlighting that realized strategy tends to be only 10 to 30 percent of the intended strategy. This is mainly because unpredictable events, such as the introduction of new regulations or technologies, will regularly act to force the original strategy off its course. All in all, most viable strategies in today's business world should have customized elements of prescriptive and emergent characteristics in order to manage the complexities of their business and still triumph over changing circumstances.

According to Thompson et al (2007), effective strategy implementation depends on competent personnel and effective internal organizational systems. No organization can hope to perform the activities required for successful strategy implementation without attracting, motivating and retaining talented managers and employees with suitable skills and intellectual capital. The task of implementing challenging strategic initiatives must be

assigned to executives who have the skills and talent to handle and can be counted on to turn decisions and actions into results to meet established targets. Without a smart, capable result-oriented management team, the implementation process ends up being hampered by missed deadlines, misdirected or wasteful efforts. Building a capable organization is thus a priority in strategy execution.

1.1.3 Insurance Industry in Kenya

Insurance entails delivery of insurance products to participants at base of the pyramid. It is offered to shield clients against specific risks in consideration for premiums matching the possibility of occurrence of the risk (Muthuiya, 2004). Most insurance firms in Kenya are private entities, with a few shareholders who are also the board members. The insurance industry forms part of the country's financial sector. Insurance industry is a critical factor to the stability and growth of the Kenyan economy, helping businesses and individuals to recover from all kinds of financial losses.

The industry is represented by a well-organized trade body known as Association of Kenya Insurers (AKI). The Association of Kenya Insurers (AKI) is vouching for continuous education on corporate governance targeting directors of insurance firms in order to change customer perception about Kenya's insurance industry. The industry is overseen by a relatively new and empowered regulator known as the Insurance Regulatory Authority (IRA). Insurance Regulatory Authority (IRA) has initiated training and certification modules for directors and top management staff of insurance firms through partnership with the institute of corporate Governance.

In Kenya, low income target market is generally ignored by the mainstream commercial and social insurance schemes and has not, for a long time, had access to appropriate insurance products (Muthuiya, 2004). While over 90% of the population in Kenya is exposed to many risks in life, with the poor being the most exposed, the overall insurance sector serves 8.4% of the total population (Shimechero, 2000).

Life assurance policies are long term in nature thus takes a long time to mature. General insurance are annual policies which expire after a period of one year or less. This study is a case study about Gateway Insurance Company Kenya limited which is an upcoming player in the insurance sector.

1.1.4 Gateway Insurance Company Ltd

Gateway Insurance Company Ltd was incorporated and licensed to transact general insurance business in 1982 with one branch in Nairobi. From this humble beginning the Company has grown from strength to strength and has fifteen branches. It has three branches in Nairobi and twelve in other major towns with at least a branch in each province in Kenya. This growth has been a result of a clear vision by the founders and management of the Company who are committed to bringing efficient insurance services closer to the people especially in the rural areas.

Despite the severe economic environment and intense competition in the industry over the years, Gateway insurance company has continued to grow to achieve a profit of Ksh. 149,916,182 by 31st December 2013, compared to the previous year where they made a profit of Ksh. 18,523,602. Gateway Insurance's mission is to be a general insurer of high

repute committed to excellence by providing competitive and innovative insurance products that satisfy customer needs while maximizing returns to stakeholders and recognizing the input of staff and business partners.

1.2 Research Problem

Organizations have over time come up with new strategies in order to meet their customer demands and remain competitive in business. Implementation processes differ depending on the nature of the strategic problems that the institution faces. According to Beer and Eisenstat (2000), there are five reasons why various strategies developed by firms were not implemented effectively. They include management issues of leadership, teamwork and strategic direction and commitment of people and their functional competence. According to Johnson and Scholes (2004), the implementation of appropriate strategies remains one of the most difficult areas of management. Substantial energy and resources must be given over to devising a strategic plan.

Implementing strategies successfully is vital for any organization public or private. Without implementation, even the most superior strategy is useless. The notion of strategy implementation might at first seem quite straightforward: the strategy is formulated and then it is implemented. Implementing would thus be perceived as being about allocating resources and changing organizational structure. However, transforming strategies into action is a far more complex and difficult task (White, 2002). Many organizations seem to have challenges in their attempt to implement their strategies.

Insurance companies in Kenya have been affected in various ways by the changes in the business environment that they operate in. Entry of more players coupled with

environmental turbulence has led to enhanced competition in the industry. This calls for a strategic fit of an organizations core competence levels, technology, leadership styles markets, culture people and environmental influences. Successful implementation of strategies should lead to survival and continuous growth. Mintzberg (1998) noted that the plan rather than the implementation comes in for scrutiny, because it is less problematic to analyze. Reducing the gap between strategy formulation and implementation has since been experienced as challenging.

Finding a solution to proper strategy implementation has been a challenge to many organisations over the years, modes of implementation vary from one organization to the next due to the various specific and unique problems different organisations face and Gateway Insurance Company is not an exception. A study was done by Mbithi (2011) on strategy implementation at Nakumatt Holdings Limited Kenya. The aims of the study were to find out how the company has been implementing the strategies they have chosen, to get to know challenges faced by the company in Strategy implementation and to determine measures the company has taken to overcome the challenges it faced during implementation of strategy. The findings were that there is no agreed upon and dominant framework in strategy implementation. Other researchers who researched on the same issue were: Machuki (2005) who looked at the challenges to strategy implementation at CMC Motors Group, Koske (2003) studied Strategy implementation and challenges in public corporations using the case of Telkom Kenya Ltd, Awino (2000) looked at the effectiveness and problems of Strategy implementation of financing higher education in Kenya by the HELB, Muthuiya (2004) studied strategy implementation and its challenges in nonprofit organizations using the case of AMREF, Aosa (1992) did a study on the

aspects of strategy implementation within large, private manufacturing companies in Kenya, Shimechero (2010) reviewed challenges of strategy implementation at Centre for African Family Studies.

The above researchers sought to bridge the gap on strategy implementation research which is critical to any organization, it should also be noted that these findings may be similar in some aspects but there are some unique differences which could be attributed to the type of organization under research. Therefore, having this in mind, the proposal sought to establish the challenges faced by Gateway insurance Company when implementing its strategies i.e. what are the challenges faced by the company during strategy implementation?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objective of this study was to determine the strategy implementation challenges faced by Gateway Insurance Company Kenya Limited.

1.4 Value of the Study

The findings of this study will help Gateway insurance company become aware of the challenges that face it during strategy implementation; because of this, the company will be able to curb those challenges in order to effectively implement their strategies.

The study will also help the company engage in strategic projects and consequently successfully implement strategies to see the projects through thereby ensuring that their resources are utilized accordingly.

The study will also help other organisations with similar profiles apply the findings to suit their mode of operations. Some of the findings can be universally applied to help in successful strategy implementation.

The study will also add on to the research done under strategic management. Through this study the research community will be moving nearer to finding a lasting solution under the challenges that face strategy implementation under strategic management, simply put, this study will help bridge the gap of information and research under strategic management, specifically, strategy implementation.

1.5 Summary

Strategy implementation is so critical in creating and sustaining competitive advantage in the business environment. In today's turbulent and competitive environment, there is an increasing recognition of the need for more dynamic approaches to formulating as well as implementing strategies. Implementing strategy is tougher and more time-consuming than strategy-making. Each implementation situation occurs in a different context, affected by different factors such as business practices and competitive situations, work environments and cultures.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The specific areas covered here are the concept of strategy, strategy implementation, strategy implementation process and the challenges of strategy implementation.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation of the Study

Ansoff (1990) defined strategy as a set of decisions making rules for guidance of organizational behavior. Mintzberg (1991) also described strategy as a plan, ploy, pattern, position and perspective. Thompson and Strickland (2003) defined strategy as the game plan that management is using to stake out market position, conduct its operation, attract and please customers then compete successfully in order to achieve organizational objectives.

Great strategies are worth nothing if they cannot be implemented (Okumus and Roper 1999). It can be extended to say that better to implement effectively a second grade strategy than to ruin a first class strategy by ineffective implementation. Less than 50% of formulated strategies get implemented (Mintzberg 1994; Miller 2002; Hambrick and Canella 1989). Every failure of implementation is a failure of formulation.

The utility of any tool lies in its effective usage and so is the case with strategy. Strategy is the instrument through which a firm attempts to exploit opportunities available in the

business environment. The performance of a firm is a function of how effective it is in converting a plan into action and executing it. Thus implementation is the key to performance, given an appropriate strategy.

Strategy as a field of enquiry developed from a practical need to understand reasons for success and failure among organizations. This research will base its findings on two theories of strategic management i.e. the resource based theory and the knowledge based view.

2.2.1 Resource Based Theory

The firm is a bundle of resources and capabilities. These resources and capabilities are made up of physical, financial, human and intangible assets. The theory is conditioned on the fact that resources are not homogenous and are limited in mobility. The firm can translate these resources and capabilities into a strategic advantage if they are valuable, rare, inimitable and the firm is organized to exploit these resources (Penrose, 1959).

The currently dominant view of corporate strategy – resource-based theory or resource-based view (RBV) of firms – is based on the concept of economic rent and the view of the company as a collection of capabilities.

This view of strategy has a coherence and integrative role that places it well ahead of other mechanisms of strategic decision making. Traditional strategy models such as Michael Porter's five forces model focus on the company's external competitive environment. Most of them do not attempt to look inside the company. In contrast, the

resource-based perspective highlights the need for a fit between the external market context in which a company operates and its internal capabilities.

In contrast to other theories such as the input - output model, the resource-based view is grounded in the perspective that a firm's internal environment, in terms of its resources and capabilities, is more critical to the determination of strategic action than is the external environment. "Instead of focusing on the accumulation of resources necessary to implement the strategy dictated by conditions and constraints in the external environment (I/O model), the resource-based view suggests that a firm's unique resources and capabilities provide the basis for a strategy. The business strategy chosen should allow the firm to best exploit its core competencies relative to opportunities in the external environment."

2.2.2 Knowledge Based View

The firm is a bundle of knowledge in this application which extends the Resource-Based View. Knowledge is a specific and special resource at the heart of the firm. Knowledge is both highly heterogeneous, difficult to imitate and difficult to understand by those outside the firm. In this theory, knowledge forms the basis for competitive advantage. It should be noted that there are some researchers who question whether this is truly a theory of the firm. As such it is noted as a view (Foss, 1996).

In the global knowledge-based competition, the role of human capital has become tremendously important. Individuals are no longer mere elements of a production system,

but owners and controllers of the most important factor of production – knowledge. Individuals decide how they want to use their skills and intellect, and direct their efforts based on personal motivations. At the same time, knowledge has become the key source for business performance. According to the knowledge-based view of the firm, a firm should be understood as a social community specializing in speed and efficiency in the creation and transfer of knowledge (Kogut & Zander 1996,).

2.3 Strategy Implementation Process

The strategic management process consists of three stages: formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation. Strategy formulation includes developing a vision and mission, identifying an organizations external opportunities and threats, determining internal strengths and weaknesses, establishing long-term objectives, generating alternative strategies, and choosing particular strategies to pursue. Strategy formulation issues include deciding what new businesses to enter, what businesses to abandon, how to allocate resources, whether to expand operations or diversify, whether to enter international markets, to merge or form a joint venture, and how to avoid a hostile takeover. Because no organization has unlimited resources, strategists must decide which alternative strategies will benefit the firm most. Strategy-formulation decisions commit an organization to specific products, markets, resources, and technologies over an extended period of time. Strategies determine long-term competitive advantages. For better or worse, strategic decisions have major multifunctional consequences and enduring effects on an organization (Thompson *et al*, 2005). Top managers have the best perspective to understand fully the ramifications of strategy-formulation decisions; they have the authority to commit the resources necessary for implementation.

Strategy implementation requires a firm to establish annual objectives, devise policies, motivate employees, and allocate resources so that formulated strategies can be executed. Strategy implementation includes developing a strategy-supportive culture, creating an effective organizational structure, redirecting marketing efforts, preparing budgets, developing and utilizing information systems, and linking employee compensation to organizational performance. Strategy implementation often is called the “action stage” of strategic management. Implementing strategy means mobilizing employees and managers to put formulated strategies into action. It’s often considered to be the most difficult stage in strategic management.

2.4 Factors in Strategy Implementation

Two sets of factors primarily shape a company’s strategy, these include External factors (macro environment, industry, competition, customers) and Internal factors (resources, competence, culture etc.) It is important to think critically about an organization’s business in terms of what is happening inside the organization and what is happening outside the organization.

According to Hill (2009) there are various models to help managers think more strategically about their organizations. SWOT Analysis (internal) is a Careful assessment of the organization and its environment in Identification of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

Strengths are an organization’s competencies Internal to the organization, Core competences, and Distinctive competencies and can enhance performance if harnessed.

Weaknesses are an organization's vulnerabilities Internal to the organization and can lead to poor performance if not addressed. Opportunities are Conditions that an organization can turn to its advantage which External to the organization and can enhance performance if exploited. Threats are Conditions that can hurt the organization and are External to the organization and can hurt performance if not confronted. SWOT provides a way of organizing information for developing strategy and operating plans and does not provide specific answers and has benefits and dangers as a strategic tool.

External Analysis Understanding the external influences on an organization Environmental (PESTEL) scanning, Industry analysis, Competitor analysis, and Market analysis. Environmental complexity can be high or low, positive or negative. Strategic management focuses on integrating all parts of an organization in strategic thinking to enhance organizational performance which allows an organization to be more proactive than reactive in shaping its own future (David, 1998). Strategic management is according to Hendry, Johnson & Newton (1993), not about establishing right or optimal solutions, but about understanding complex relationships and the uncertain environment. Strategic capabilities are dependent on which resources and competences the organization possesses. These must reach a threshold level in order for the organization to continue to exist (Johnson et al. 2005).

2.5 Challenges of Strategy Implementation

Whereas most organizations develop very good strategies, successful implementation remains a major challenge because translating strategy into action is far complex,

difficult and expensive. The challenges range from technology, human resource, and organizational structure, globalization of business, culture, leadership, policies and reward system. Hill (2009) conducted a study that suggested that organizations that implement good practices covering a range of managerial aspects, and who are achieving organizational results are likely to be closer to satisfying their staff.

Durden (2001) showed that technology plays a key role in the implementation of strategy. There is inadequate research into technology strategies and change through the introduction and use of new technology that is consistent with global electronic banking services from formulation of strategies, to planning approaches, to physical implementation of technology in organizations.

There has been a shift in focus from Information Technology being conceived as a means of improving the efficiency of processes to being used as a strategic tool in the hands of management, and enabling re-engineering and transforming the ways organizations do business. Information technology is no longer considered as merely a supportive tool for existing organizational processes, but is perceived as an integrating technology for initiating business changes and shaping structures in organizations, to align them to business needs.

Successful strategy implementation hinges upon managers' ability to motivate employees, which is more an art than a science. Strategies formulated but not implemented serve no useful purpose. Interpersonal skills are especially critical for successful strategy implementation. Strategy implementation activities affect all employees and managers in an organization.

2.6 Summary

Strategy as a field of enquiry developed from a practical need to understand reasons for success and failure among organizations. This research will base its findings on two theories of strategic management i.e. the resource based theory and the knowledge based view. Knowledge is a specific and special resource at the heart of the firm. Knowledge is both highly heterogeneous, difficult to imitate and difficult to understand by those outside the firm. Resource based theory is conditioned on the fact that resources are not homogenous and are limited in mobility. The firm can translate these resources and capabilities into a strategic advantage if they are valuable, rare, inimitable and the firm is organized to exploit these resources (Penrose, 1959). The currently dominant view of corporate strategy – resource-based theory or resource-based view (RBV) of firms – is based on the concept of economic rent and the view of the company as a collection of capabilities.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design, data collection and the techniques for data analysis that were used to carry out the project research.

3.2 Research Design

This was a case study since the unit of analysis was one organization. This case study aimed at getting detailed information regarding the strategy implementation and challenges affecting strategy implementation at Gateway Insurance Company Kenya Limited.

The case study research method is used continually by researchers in carefully planned and crafted studies of real-life situations, issues, and problems. The case study method deals with the processes that take place and their interrelationship. According to Kothari (2002), a case study involves a careful and complete examination of a social unit, institution, family, cultural group or an entire community and embraces depth rather than breath of a study.

Case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited

number of events or conditions and their relationships. Researcher Yin (1984) defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1984). White (2002) suggests that a case study requires a number of methods for its successful accomplishment.

3.3 Data Collection

Primary data was collected from the company staff by use of interview guides (Appendix II) in order to establish the implementation strategy and challenges affecting strategy implementation at Gateway Insurance Company Kenya Limited. Interview guides were administered through interview and discussions to key informants which included five senior managers based in the company's Nairobi county branches.

The interview guide comprised of open ended questions. Secondary data sources were also to provide additional information. This was obtained from already documented materials such as in-house publications, in-house training materials and periodic performance reviews. Additional interview methods such as telephone and email were also used in the data collection.

3.4 Data Analysis

The completed interview guides were edited for completeness and consistency before processing the responses. Being a case study, content analysis was the most useful technique. It is a technique used to make inferences by systematically and objectively

identifying specific characteristics and messages. This was the best method of analyzing the qualitative data that was collected from the interviews and discussions. This method is ideal for data analysis because it does not restrict the respondents on answers and also has the potential of generating detailed information on the challenges of implementing strategy at Gateway Insurance Company Kenya Limited.

3.5 Summary

The research project embraced a case study design. Primary data was collected from the company staff by use of interview guides. . Interview guides were administered through interview and discussions to key informants which included five senior managers based in the company's Nairobi county branches. The completed interview guides were edited for completeness and consistency before processing the responses.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The objective of the study was to establish strategy implementation at Gateway Insurance Company Limited Kenya. This chapter presents the analysis and results with regard to the objective and discussion of the same.

4.2 Respondents Profile

The respondents comprised of five senior managers based in Nairobi County; the General Manager (general insurance), the Underwriting manager, Human Resources manager, Chief Accountant and one departmental head i.e. the head of Communications department. In total, the researcher interviewed five respondents. All the respondents interviewed had university degrees with four of them having a Master's degree as well.

The respondents had worked in the organization for over three years thus having sufficient information regarding the organization. The respondents have been holding their current positions for a different period of time, ranging from a period of three to five years, therefore, the respondents have sufficient knowledge of their area of specialization. This senior level management was selected because of their vast knowledge in operational and strategic management issues of the Company. All the respondents were based at the head office at the time the study was carried out.

4.3 The Organization's Implementation Focus

Gateway has the main objectives of providing the best insurance products at the most reasonable prices and to offer unparalleled customer service to their customers. Gateway insurance strategy focuses on attaining superior long term yields on investment through a well-diversified spread of assets. Gateway Insurance's mission is to be a general insurer of high repute committed to excellence by providing competitive and innovative insurance products that satisfy customer needs while maximizing returns to stakeholders and recognizing the input of staff and business partners. Gateway insurance company operations are guided as explained below:

Corporate Governance

Gateway Insurance Company limited boards of directors are responsible for the overall direction of the company's corporate policies and are accountable to the shareholders in ensuring compliance with the law and the highest standards business ethics. The directors are committed to conducting business in accordance with the generally accepted corporate practice and endorse the internationally developed principles of good corporate governance.

Customer Service

At Gateway Insurance the customer comes first. It is their aim to deliver a consistently high standard of customer care to all their customers and provide an excellent human experience in all areas of service. They are committed to providing customer satisfaction which is unmatched in the industry. Its process for providing excellent customer service includes establishing operational procedures and internal infrastructure that support

customer service, continuously measuring customer and employee satisfaction, embracing change and striving persistently to improve.

Human Resource

Once recruited the staff undergo a rigorous internal and external training to ensure that they have the necessary skills to deliver efficient services to its customers and the public at large. The company also encourages and provides opportunities for personal career development in order to help staff become more efficient. It believes, it has built a team of efficient, confident professionals with the skills to help in consolidating the gains that it has made and position the Company to play its rightful role and walk into the future with confidence.

Gateway is keen on ensuring that it has the right people for the right roles in the organization. They achieve this by putting in place policies that attract, develop, retain and motivate quality staff. They also provide a safe and conducive work environment that enables all employees to meet the business objectives set forth. Professionalism, urgent action and integrity are key values amongst their staff creating a performance ethic that ensures every task and service is friendly, proficient and quick for the benefit of their customers.

Technology

In a world that is fast changing Gateway has embraced technology and is committed to modernizing its procedures and systems. In this regard the Company is well equipped with the most modern communication technology facilities and capacity in order to

deliver competitive and efficient services. Nearly all of its procedures and systems are computerized.

4.4 The Organization's Strategy Implementation Challenges

4.4.1 The Role of Communication on Implementation of a Strategic Plan

The study revealed that, communication at Gateway Insurance Co. Ltd is well enhanced at both the horizontal level and vertical level. Moreover, communication aspects are emphasized in the implementation of strategic plan stage thus making the strategic management process to run smoothly.

The organization in addition has adopted a two-way-communication program that permits and solicits questions from employees about issues regarding the formulated strategy and thus informing the employees about the new requirements, tasks and activities to be performed by the affected employees.

This implies that, it is essential both during and after an organizational change to communicate information about organizational developments to all levels in a timely fashion. However, one may not misunderstand passing of information or the sharing of information to mean active participation by employees but rather it is the full engagement with direct dialogue that produces active participants in the change process. Rapa and Kauffman indicated that, the way in which change is presented to employees is of great influence to their acceptance of it. To deal with this critical situation, an integrated communications plan must be developed. Such a plan is an effective vehicle for focusing the employees' attention on the value of the selected strategy to be implemented.

4.4.2 Challenge of Integrating New and Old System

Conventional implementations of strategic plan concepts generally over-emphasize on the structural aspects and reduce the whole effort down to organizational top management exercise. This study signified that, implementation of strategic plan requires an integrative point of view.

In addition to the organizational structure, cultural aspects and the human resource perspective need also to be considered. An implementation effort is therefore really a boundless set of activities which do not concentrate on implications of only one component, such as the organizational structure. For the insurance industry, it is of great importance to integrate general facts as well in the reflection of the implementation process by virtue of the risks inherent with the sector.

It is therefore the consideration of general and specific facts that ascertain that cultural aspects and human resources aspects are of as much importance as organizational aspects. Findings of this study tally with the findings put forward by Dean and Terziovski, (2001) that an integrative interpretation allows an important scope of development for implementation activities.

4.4.3 Political Stability

Political stability is a challenge to the company. Changes in the domestic political environment bring about changes in Government policies, objectives and strategies which directly impact on the implementation of strategies at Gateway. In addition, the dynamics

of the political parties and the potential alliances, political events such as elections, and uncertainty also affect the implementation of strategy at Gateway Insurance Company.

4.4.4 Supportive Implementation Instruments

To facilitate implementation in general, implementation instruments should be applied to support the processes adequately. This study revealed that, Gateway Insurance Company Ltd has a strategy planning system that is integrated with other control systems like budgets, information and reward systems which is sometimes neglected when carrying out implementation exercises.

Moreover, the company uses balanced scorecard to provide a framework for integration of the strategic plan to meet the insurance requirements. This is an indication that, in the context of implementing strategies, the application of the right implementation of strategic plan instruments should not be neglected.

4.4.5 Risk Management

Most respondents informed the researcher the company does not have a fully operational risk testing program. Furthermore, the maturity of risk testing varies across the life and health insurance sectors. Moreover, to produce this information it takes longer than a month and they do not have fully documented risk policies that cover the significant risks to which they are exposed. The degree of coordination between and among risk, finance and compliance functions is moderate level of coordination and this poses a challenge to strategy implementation.

Risk quantification which requires internal risk and capital models to meet the highest quality standards, be appropriately calibrated (“real time”), and fully tested and documented, as well as subject to independent scrutiny and validation. In quantifying risks, market and underwriting risks are most likely to be stochastically modeled, and that they had infrastructure or data issues that prevented them from following their desired approach to risk quantification and henceforth a challenge to strategy implementation.

4.4.6 Organization Culture

Culture impacts on most aspects of an organization, such as how decisions are and by whom they are made. Respondents stated that when it comes to decisions affecting normal day to day running of the organization several members of staff are resistant to change and would like the status quo to remain. New ideas and personnel are resisted and hence difficult to retain new key resource personnel. The respondents indicated that challenges brought about by culture include; inter-communication problems between departments, lack of trust when the strategies threatens culture, opposition of strategies, opposition of change within the organization, administrative perception which hinder full implementation of strategy, delayed services and also poor service delivery.

4.5 Discussion

Organizations seem to have difficulties in strategy implementation, however, researchers have shown a number of problems in strategy implementation such as: weak management roles in implementation, a lack of commitment to the strategy, unawareness or misunderstanding of the strategy, unaligned organizational systems and resources, poor

coordination and sharing of responsibilities, inadequate capabilities, competing activities, and uncontrollable environmental factors (Hill,2009).

Kaplan and Norton (2001) indicate that the core of any business strategy is the customer value proposition which describes the unique mix of products, price, service, relationship and image that a company offers. Subsequently, Gateway has identified the wishes of their clientele which have been incorporated in their strategic plan. At the same time, this study has established high quality leadership as very crucial in the strategic plan implementation process. Gateway Insurance Ltd has a structure that provides overall framework for strategy implementation. Nonetheless, just as Pearce and Robinson (2004) argued, while structure is critical in strategic plan implementation it is not in itself sufficient to ensure successful execution. Within the organization structure, individuals, groups and units are mechanisms of organizational action which is a major determinant of successful strategic plan implementation.

4.6 Summary

The findings from this study on the challenges of implementation of strategy at Gateway established that there are challenges encountered by the company that are also evident in other studies previously conducted.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher provides a summary of the findings, the conclusions made from the study, the recommendations made by the researcher based on the findings as well as the suggestions for further research.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study found out that Gateway faces many challenges while implementing strategies. This chapter summarizes the implementation challenges which the study established. The findings of the study show that the major challenges encountered by the company included some aspects of organizational culture and structure, high degree of staff turnover and resistance to change. Others included lack of infrastructural facilities, government/ political factors and inadequate resources.

Findings also asserts that successful implementation of a strategic plan communicate the desires of top management but must be backed by an effective planning process. This allegation was reinforced by findings from the primary research where the researcher found that poor implementation of strategy can result in failure of a strategy.

Implementation of strategic plan practically improves on service delivery to a large extent. In addition, implementation of strategic plan is a team effort. From the study, the researcher found that, once an organization has set it vision and mission, strategy

formulation and implementation flows since strategies are formulated and implemented around them. Findings also asserts that successful implementation of strategic plan communicate the desires of top management but must be backed by an effective planning process. This allegation was reinforced by findings from the primary research where the researcher found that poor implementation of strategy can result in failure of a strategy.

Gateway Insurance Co. Ltd offered training to employees on new products and services. The training also covered customer relationship management. After the training sessions, employees were assisted in utilizing the learnt skills in the real working situations. The study also found that the company encouraged employees to brainstorm, share new ideas, and to own the implementation of strategic plan process.

The study found out that in order to overcome challenges related to core competences the Company had strengthened its training programs, performance with reward and evaluate the skills required to provide competitive service.

5.3 Conclusion

The main factors that shape a company's strategy are external factors (macro environment, industry, competition, customers) and internal factors (resources, competence, culture etc.) It is important to think critically about an organization's business in terms of what is happening inside the organization and what is happening outside the organization both of which if successfully incorporated in an organization's strategy will most likely lead to successful strategy implementation.

As a way of dealing with the challenges encountered, Gateway Insurance Co. Ltd involved all employees and other stakeholders in its implementation of strategic plan

process. There was also communication to all parties to be affected by the changes as a result of new strategies implemented. This goes ahead to support the resource based theory which sees the firm as a bundle of resources which should be utilized accordingly to achieve the desired results.

Other initiatives adopted included training of employees, encouraging employees to brainstorm, share new ideas, and own the implementation of strategic plan process, change in leadership style, rewarding the performance of senior managers as well as lower level managers and employees. In order to address the challenges of financial constraints, Gateway Insurance Co. Ltd started getting assistance from international organizations (this was mainly because it is a Kenyan insurance company founded in Kenya). The company also recognized the importance of social cultural processes in successful implementation of strategic plans hence its development and adoption of core guiding values. The above solidifies the knowledge based theory which agrees that the firm is a bundle of knowledge that needs to be utilized accordingly to achieve competitive advantage.

Essentially successful implementation of strategic plan is a vehicle for providing forward-looking leadership regarding the most fundamental issues of concern to an organization and its environment in a very purposeful, systematic, and effective manner and this universally agreed

As indicated by Foss (1996), management's handling of the implementation of strategic plan process can be considered successful if things go smoothly enough that the company meets or beats its strategic and financial performance targets and shows good progress in

achieving management's strategic vision geared towards efficient and effective service delivery to its intended clientele.

5.4 Recommendations

Strategy implementation is crucial for successful implementation of a strategic plan, some of the recommendations. Insurance companies should ensure that during strategy implementation the various stakeholders of an organization are involved. Insurance companies should ensure that employees affected by the strategy are the core aspect in implementation of strategic plan focusing on the outcome and also ensure that the necessary resources are available during implementation of strategic plan. Moreover, insurance companies should assess the customer-employees needs to ensure that it is in line with implementation of strategic plan and make sure that implementation of strategic plan is a team effort. For Gateway Insurance Co. Ltd to continue implementing its strategies effectively; it is recommended that the organization looks at its failures and challenges and then address the same.

Social media and social networking channels add an additional dimension to customer interaction. Moreover, the adoption and use of these channels goes beyond just end consumers – agents and advisors increasingly expect information and transactional services to be available on the device of their choice. As a result, Gateway Insurance Company Kenya Limited have to manage not only internal information systems data, but also their distributors' and prospective customers' social, mobile, and online data. Effectively combining these external sources with internal data can provide the company

a significant information advantage when targeting, selecting, and serving their customers.

On cultural aspects, and resistance to change, Gateway Insurance Co. Ltd should recognize the fact that when a company's culture is not in line with the current strategy, the cultures need to be changed. Successful cultural changes have to be led by top management. What organizations leaders say and do plants the seeds of cultural change. Only top management has the power and organizational influence to bring about major change in a company's culture.

In addition, insurance companies should ensure that the necessary resources are available during implementation of strategic plan which impacts positively on service delivery. Insurance companies should also realize that, effective service delivery is possible if there is proper implementation of strategic plans since this would act as a guide in policy formulation. Furthermore, customer service should be the core aspect in implementation of strategic plan focusing on efficient and effective service delivery.

The government through Insurance Regulatory Authority should ensure stability in the insurance industry by regulating prices to ensure quality underwriting of risks as well as moderating emerging trends so as to prevent crisis in this industry.

The management of the Gateway Insurance Co should put in place mechanisms to ensure that their employees are properly motivated through reward and sanctions based on their work output. As much as money is an important source of motivation; the employees should also get non-monetary rewards such as recognition. The organization should therefore motivate through adequate rewards in recognition of the achievement of the

targets. In addition the respondents pointed out that not only should these rewards be developed and extended to the employees but they also need to be aligned to the actions and objectives of individuals with the objectives and needs of the firm's strategy.

The recommendations to the leadership and management challenges include; team building, organizing workshops, communication, involving employees in decision making and engaging professionals to run the different departments within the organization.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

This study depended on interviews and discussions with management and the employees of the organization. It would have been of value to obtain the views of those served by the organization or other stakeholders in the firm. The scope and depth of study was also limited by the time and financial resource constraints. This put the researcher under immense time pressure.

The research design was a case study limited to one organization. Thus generalizing it to other organizations operating under different environment, leadership and resource abilities can be misleading.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

A similar study in a different environmental landscape needs to be carried out putting into consideration the different socio-economic practices and political setting which largely

influenced the results found in this study. This will help get a more general inference to studies such as this.

The study recommends that since market variables vary from time to time core competences should be harnessed to bring out competitive advantage to Gateway Insurance Company Kenya Limited.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Introduction Letter



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
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MBA PROGRAMME

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DATE 8/AUG/2015

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The bearer of this letter KEVIN JUMBA

Registration No. D61/61403/2013

is a bona fide continuing student in the Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree program in this University.

He/she is required to submit as part of his/her coursework assessment a research project report on a management problem. We would like the students to do their projects on real problems affecting firms in Kenya. We would, therefore, appreciate your assistance to enable him/her collect data in your organization.

The results of the report will be used solely for academic purposes and a copy of the same will be availed to the interviewed organizations on request.

Thank you.

PATRICK NYABUTO
MBA ADMINISTRATOR
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS



Appendix II: Interview Guide

Research objective: Investigate factors affecting strategy implementation at Gateway Insurance Company Limited.

1. Which department are you in?
2. What is your job title?
3. How many years have you worked at Gateway Insurance?
4. How do you define the concept of strategy implementation?
5. What kind of issues would you associate strategy implementation with?
6. How do you participate in the strategy implementation process?
7. How are the policies pertaining to strategy implementation communicated within the different levels of the organization?
8. Describe your own role in the process of Strategy implementation?
9. Evaluate the degree of the strategy implementation problems in your organization?
10. Do staff and management have a clear understanding and support formal policy development and implementation?
11. Does the company have financial capacity to implement strategies?
12. Does the management staff have the skills that enable successful strategy implementation?
13. Does the current organizational structure support strategy implementation?
14. Does the company have a selected Focus Strategy?
15. What challenges do you face in terms of employees morale, behavior and general approach to work during the implementation of the strategies?

16. Have you determined the key success factors of the strategy?

17. What is your general comment on strategy implementation of the Company?

Thank you for your cooperation