

VPM's
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Programme: PGDM (2017-19) (HR)
PGDM Trimester V Examination December 2018

Subject	Building Learning Organizations		
Roll No.		Marks	60 Marks
Total No. of Questions	7	Duration	3 Hours
Total No. of printed pages	3	Date	24/12/2018

Note: Q1 is compulsory and solve any FOUR from the remaining SIX questions.

Q1) 20 Marks (Compulsory)

Case Study: Developing a Learning Strategy at Wellread Books

Wellread Books is a high street retailer established in 1993 as a single bookshop but which has since grown rapidly and is now present on many of the UK's high streets and in many shopping centres. Until 2005, Wellread served only the book market – particularly specialising in children's books – but following the appointment of a new chief executive, the company increasingly diversified into a number of 'related' areas such as music, DVDs and stationery. These areas have grown to represent a substantial part of each store. Furthermore, larger Wellread stores now have cafés where customers are encouraged to browse books before they buy.

Until 2008, Wellread experienced strong growth and increasing market share in the book retailing sector. Since then, however, growth has slowed considerably, even when accounting for a decrease in consumer spending during the recent economic downturn. More worryingly, its market share has begun to recede and Wellread is losing out to its high street competitors, larger retailers who sell bestsellers at marked-down prices and online book sellers. To understand the deeper reasons for this decline, Wellread commissioned market research to explore consumers' perceptions of the store and what shoppers wanted from a book retailer. The results were mixed. The research found that Wellread rated highly on the following criteria: friendly staff and welcoming atmosphere. Moreover, the annual customer surveys show that customer service was rated highly among regular shoppers at Wellread, many reporting that they know staff by name and often drop by for coffee and to browse the books. The market research also found, however, that Wellread was rated worse than its competitors on staff knowledge (particularly in the areas of music and film), the range of titles held and speed of service. Of particular concern to the company is the fact that the high levels of 'footfall' at Wellread stores appear to translate into comparatively low sales volumes.

The company also recently conducted its first ever employee attitude survey which asked for employee opinion on a wide range of issues, including the company itself, their jobs, why they chose to work for Wellread and what they felt they brought to the company. The survey showed that a core of workers in each store had been with Wellread for a number of years, albeit alongside a quite substantial transient workforce. These long-term employees appeared to be knowledgeable and passionate about books, were committed and often highly qualified. Many were concerned, however, about developmental opportunities within the company. Morale among staff appeared to be high, although this was largely explained by an apparent loyalty to their colleagues and to their store manager. One respondent commented: 'I don't really see myself as a Wellread employee, just an employee of this particular store.'

In keeping with the relaxed atmosphere that the company seeks to develop within its stores, it advocates a paternalist approach to employee management. Commensurately, the company allows a fair degree of autonomy to store managers in how staff are managed at a local level, and whilst it promotes regular performance appraisals it is aware that some managers take this process less seriously than others. Where they are conducted, they are generally informal meetings used for employees to raise concerns or to make suggestions. Typically, no formal records are kept regarding appraisals. Wellread has always recognised that business success relies on good customer service and the focus of employee induction has been to instil in employees the importance of creating an access-

ible shopping environment which runs counter to the popular perception of bookshops as 'stuffy' places and booksellers as 'snobby and condescending'. New employee induction is, however, typically brief and conducted by the store manager, often involving little more than a chat as they 'walk the shop'. The only demarcation of staff on the shopfloor is between café and store workers. Store workers typically work wherever needed in response to demand. Following induction, training activity for customer service advisors is limited. All shop staff are trained in the use of the point-of-sale technology and given a brief tutorial in the shelving system. Staff are trained as and when necessary if new technology is introduced into the store (for example, there is talk of introducing an Espresso book machine into some stores which can create bound copies of out-of-print books to order). Café staff is given training in using the coffee machine and in basic health and safety. Drawing on all the information gathered in the review process, Well-read has devised a five-year growth strategy focused on increasing sales and efficiency, improving customer perception and awareness of the brand and differentiating itself in the marketplace.

Questions:

1. How might learning and development activities contribute to Wellread's business strategy? What do you think should be the objectives of learning and development interventions? (6 marks)
2. What types of behaviours would you seek to develop among these employee groups to contribute to the achievement of strategic objectives? (6 marks)
3. How would you develop other aspects of HRM to support the achievement of strategic objectives and how would you integrate these with the training and development activities you would put in place at Wellread? (8 marks)

Attempt Any FOUR from the Remaining SIX Questions

Q2) Any two from (a) or (b) or (c) ————— (5x2) = 10 Marks

- a) What is the contrast between Training & Learning? Cite examples.
- b) What is coaching and the continuous learning framework?
- c) Explain the importance of Systems Thinking in the Learning Subsystem

Q3) Any one from (a) or (b) ————— 10 Marks

- a) What are the types of Learning? Explain Action Learning in Details with examples.
- b) Explain the 10 strategies for empowering and enabling people

Q4) Any two from (a) or (b) or (c) ————— (5x2) = 10 Marks

- a) What is the Learning Culture? How can an organization inculcate a learning culture?
- b) What are the components of a Learning Plan?
- c) What is Learning Capacity Of an Organisation? Explain.

Q5) Any one from (a) or (b) ————— 10 Marks

- a) This is a case study of an organization of around 250 professional people, spread across several offices in Scotland, with an international reputation for design. Rapid expansion had resulted in an impossible stress to the traditional forms of knowledge sharing. This case demonstrates the early gains that can be achieved at little cost. The organization needed to invest in knowledge management and a standard portal to support the professional development of staff, improve simple communications and collaboration, and transfer project knowledge across the entire organization. Keppie Design is Scotland's leading independent architectural practice. The company enjoys an international reputation in health-care design and education. The director are proud of the company's 150-year history, including the partnership with the internationally revered Charles Rennie Mackintosh. During that history the business has secured a reputation for quality buildings that work well at a technical level as well as aesthetically. For example, some of Glasgow's 19th-century hospitals pioneered the practice of air conditioning far in advance of their time. More recently, Keppie Design

architects lead in setting the standards for low-carbon office design.

Rapid expansion, changing trends, business growth etc. highlight the importance of knowledge management for the company. The rapid expansion placed impossible stresses on the traditional forms of knowledge sharing and training. The company growth relied on increasing numbers of trainees who lacked the technical understanding that was a cornerstone of the company's reputation.

1. Why would knowledge management be important for Keppie Design Company?

2. Suggest ways to store and share knowledge as part of Knowledge Management.

b) Explain the new Leadership roles required for Managers in a Learning Organisation

Q6) Any two from (a) or (b) or (c) ————— (5x2) = 10 Marks

- a) Explain the Systems Model for Managing Knowledge
- b) Illustrate the difference between Instructor, Coach and Mentor.
- c) What are the 3 levels of learning to become a Learning Organization?

Q7) Any two from (a) or (b) or (c) ————— (5x2) = 10 Marks

- a) In short, explain the 5 disciplines to become a Learning Organisation
- b) How can an organization set learning goals?
- c) Explain the Learning Operation as part of the Sarder Framework to Build a Learning Organisation.