

AN ENQUIRY INTO APPLICATION OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT AT MICROSOFT CORPORATION

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ABSTRACT

Henry Fayol, introduced a 'General Theory of Management' that can be applied to all levels of management and every department. The theory is practised by the managers to organize and regulate the internal activities of an organization. His concentration was on accomplishing managerial efficiency.

14 Principles of Management as describes by Henri Fayol are:

1. **Division of Labour:** Specialization of jobs. Work should be divided & subdivided and allotted to various persons according to their area of expertise. It aims to make task simple, enhance its speed and performance overtime.

2. **Party of Authority & Responsibility:** Authority & Responsibility are co-existing, i.e., if authority is given to a person, he should be made responsible and vice-versa.

Authority refers to the right of superiors to get exactness from their sub-ordinates. Responsibility means obligation for the performance of the job assigned.

Authority without responsibility leads to irresponsible behaviour whereas responsibility without authority makes the person ineffective.

3. **Unity of Command:** A Sub-ordinate should receive orders and be accountable to one and only one boss at a time. A person should not receive instructions from more than one person to provide a disciplined, stable & orderly existence.

This can't be achieved without unity of direction.

4. **Unity of Direction:** One-head plan for a group of activities having similar objectives. These activities should be under the charge of a particular manager.

According to this principle, efforts of all members should be directed towards common goal. This is to avoid duplication of efforts and wastage of resources.

5. **Equity:** Combination of fairness, kindness & justice. Similar treatment to people of similar position.

This doesn't mean total absence of harshness.

6. **Order:** Proper & Systematic arrangement of things (Material Order) and people (Social order).

Material Order: There should be safe, appropriate and specific place for a specific article, activity and commodity.

Social Order: Selection and appointment of most suitable person on the suitable job. Everyone should have a specific place and a specific department.

7. **Discipline:** Sub-ordinates should respect their superiors and obey their order for smooth running of the enterprise. To enforce discipline there should be good superiors at all levels, clear & fair agreements between workers and punishments should be applied judiciously.
8. **Initiative:** Workers should be encouraged to take initiative in the work assigned to them. People can be encouraged to suggest improvement in formulation and implementation, suggest ideas, experiences & new methods with the help of monetary and non-monetary incentives.
9. **Fair Renumeration:** The quantum and method of renumeration should be fair, reasonable, satisfactory & rewarding of the efforts.

Wages should be determined on the basis of cost of living, work assigned, financial position of business, wage rate prevailing etc.

Fayol also recommended provision of other benefits such as free education, medical & residential facilities to workers.

10. **Stability of Tenure:** The period of service in a job should be fixed. There should be stability of job, and ample amount of time should be provided to an employee to get used to new work and render worthwhile services. This enhances quality and quantity of work, while creating a sense of belongingness and team spirit.
11. **Scalar Chain:** There should be a chain of superiors ranging from the ultimate authority to the lowest. Every message should pass through scalar chain.

But for sake of convenience & urgency, a short cut can be taken known as 'Gang Plank'.

12. **Sub-Ordination of Individual Interest to General Interest:** Reconciliation should be achieved between individual and group interest as far as possible.

In order to achieve this, employees should be honest & sincere, reconciliation through mutual agreement should be there, and Proper & Regular supervision of work is required. Everyone should work towards the greater interest of the organization.

13. **Espirit De' Corps:** It refers to team spirit, harmony and mutual understanding among the members.

Managers should be against dividing employees into competing groups. Face to Face communication should be developed. Managers should infuse team spirit & belongingness. There should be no place for misunderstanding.

Following steps can assure Espirit De' Corps, Proper coordination of work, development of informal relations, rewards and remuneration for improved and further improvements in performance and a conscious awareness of task significance and social responsibility.

14. **Centralization & De-Centralization:** Absolute centralization or decentralization is not feasible.

Centralization means concentration of authority at top level.

De-Centralization means disposal of decision making to all levels.

We aim at presenting a Case-Study on Applications of the above principles at Microsoft Corporation.

MICROSOFT

Microsoft Corporation is an American multinational technology company with headquarters in Redmond, Washington. It develops, manufactures, licenses, supports, and sells computer software, consumer electronics, personal computers, and related services.

Microsoft ranked No. 21 in the 2020 Fortune 500 rankings of the largest United States corporations by total revenue. As of 2020, Microsoft has the third-highest global brand valuation.

The company's 1986 Initial public offering (IPO), and subsequent rise in its share price, created 3 Billionaires and an estimated 12,000 millionaires among Microsoft employees. Since, 1999s, it has diversified its portfolio and had made a number of acquisitions including LinkedIn and Skype Technologies. ^[1]

Microsoft's mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more.

What Microsoft values:

- **Citizenship:** Microsoft works to be a responsible partner to those who place their trust in them, conducting business in a way that is inclusive, transparent, and respectful to human rights.
- **Trustworthy Computing:** Microsoft builds their trusted cloud on four foundation principles – Security, privacy, Compliance and Transparency.
- **Innovation:** Using the power of AI and computing, Microsoft delivers technology innovation that inspires people of all ages and abilities, eliminate barriers, improve lives and strengthen communities.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Microsoft celebrates diversity. They believe their continued success is a corollary of the unique skills, experiences and backgrounds that our employees bring to their company.
- **Environment:** Microsoft leads the way in sustainability and use technology to minimize the impact of their operations and products. ^[5]

DIVISION OF LABOUR

1. Microsoft currently operates on a “**product type divisional**” organizational structure. This structure implies divisions based on certain computer hardware and software products, or organizational inputs. Each division focuses on a specific line of goods and services with their own research and development, Sales and Customer Service Staff.

However, in the early 1975s, Bill Gates adapted the Functional Structure where sections under the CEO perform tasks is specialises in despite co-operating towards the same project. At that point of time, this was a good move as Microsoft was a programming company and thus having programming department to be prominent was sensible.

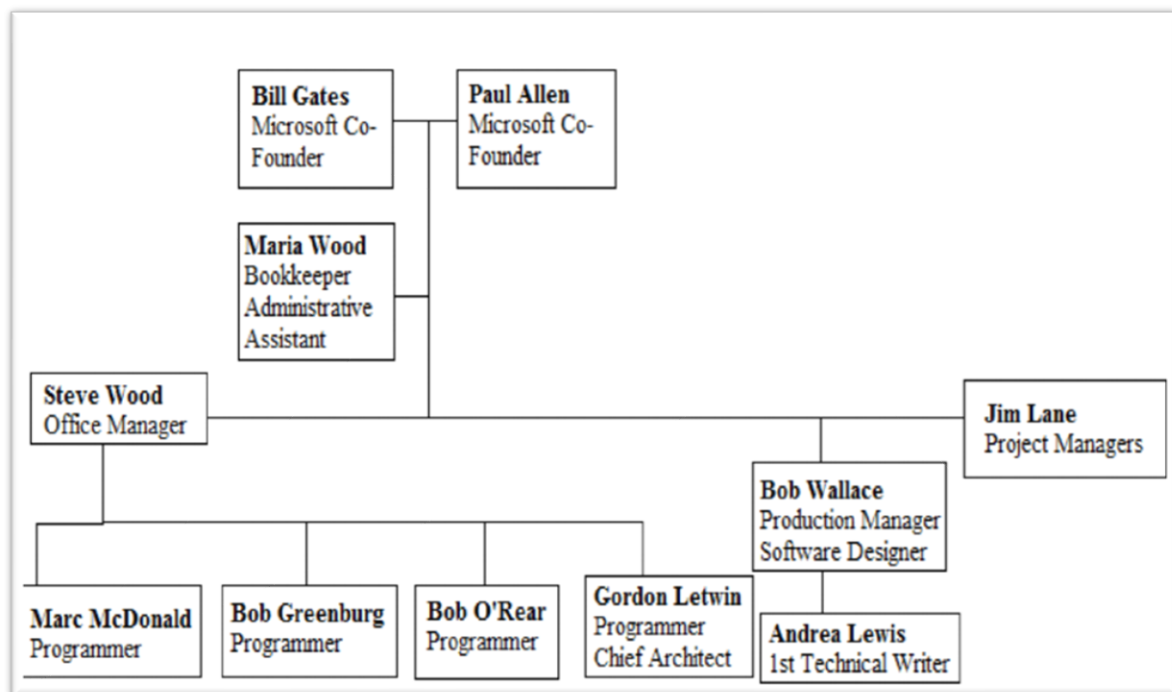


Image I : Microsoft's Functional Structure. (Early 1957s)

In 2010, the change to Divisional Structure was encouraged due to more focus on the customer requirements pertaining to a specific product, reduction of functional duplication, Easier cross-product coordination. ^[14]

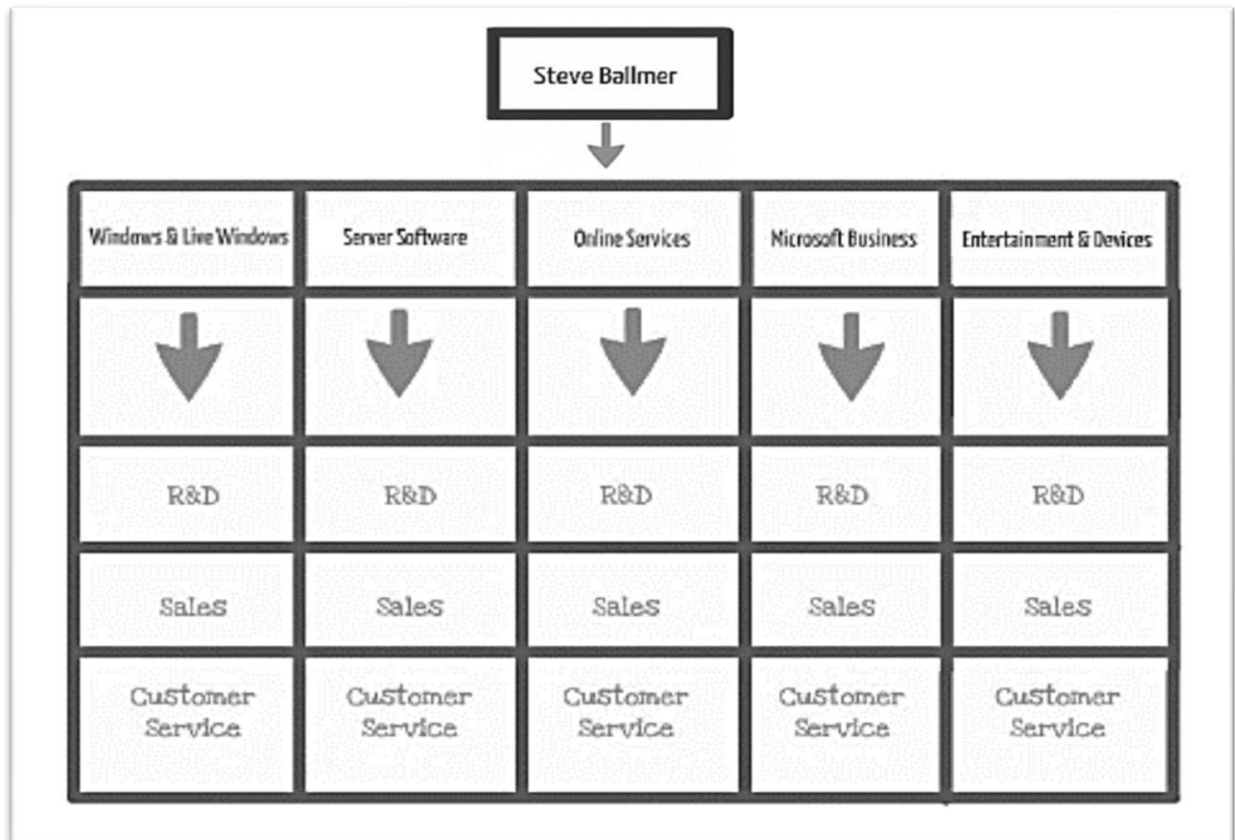


Image II : Microsoft's Divisional Structure (2010 - 2015)

2. Specialization of employees at their specific task is ranked on a level scale. The higher the level, the more power the employee has. Microsoft employees are situated on a scale from level 59 to 80. ^[18]
3. In June 2015, Microsoft again underwent a change in its organizational structure ('Img III') to align its strategic direction as a productive and platform company. The company on the basis of divided into two functional groups the engineering groups and Business functions group.

Under the new organizational structure, heads of engineering groups directly report to CEO Satya Nadella with positive implications on new product development initiatives and innovation potential. This makes Microsoft, able to introduce new products and services to marketplace in the short duration of time. ^[15]

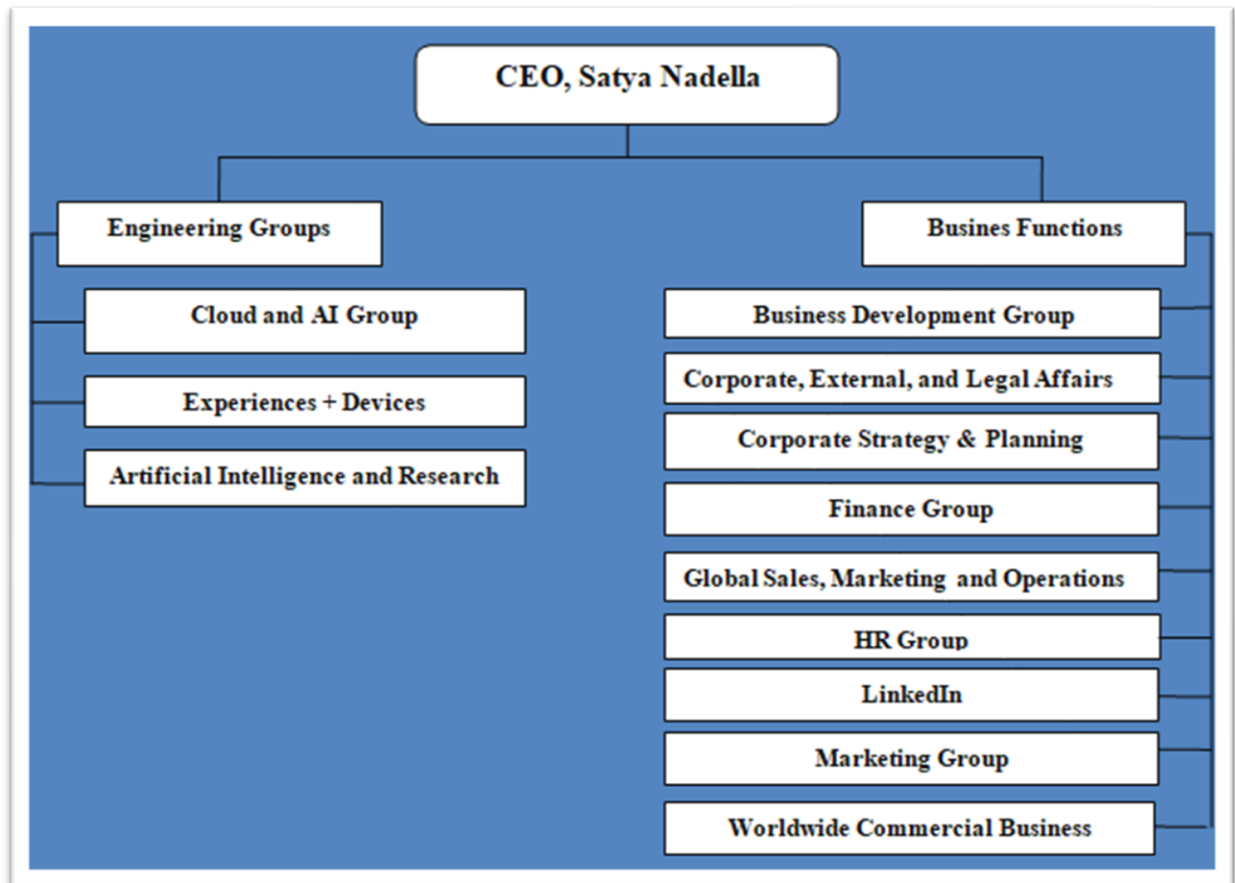


Image III : Microsoft's organizational structure (Post 2015)

PARTY OF AUTHORITY & RESPONSIBILITY

1. All divisional Directors have their field of responsibility where they are free to do what they want to contribute to the overall success of the group's strategy. The Directors hold authority to make decisions, as well as the responsibility for the overall success of their strategy. ^[20]

DISCIPLINE

1. Microsoft's employee evaluation and rewards system helps in enforcing discipline in the organization. Ratings provided, force managers to constructively deal with poor performers, followed at every level of management rigorously. ^[2]

EQUITY

1. Microsoft is run by a board of directors made up of 12 Members elected every year at the annual shareholder's meeting using a majority vote system. This ensures that that people are provided fair chance to select the top-level administration. ^[1]
2. Microsoft aims at increasing Black representation in its workforce, seeking to double the number of black people Microsoft employs in leadership position by 2025. Microsoft assures that it is not engaging in racial preferences or quotas in seeking to reach its affirmative actions and outreach goals. ^[9]
3. Microsoft investigated a dozen of complaints of discrimination and harassment against female employees. The major query of the women was, that they didn't see an opportunity to advance, faced repeated discrimination and harassment at workplace – and that most of their complaints were ignored by the human resource department.

Several cases raised about sexual harassments, being assigned secretarial work and being passed over for promotions. Apart from this case, Microsoft is also facing gender discrimination lawsuits from current and former employees. ^[10]

4. Microsoft is also facing pay discrimination lawsuits. A former cybersecurity engineer at Microsoft, Katherine Missouri's, filed a lawsuit in 2015, alleging that managers repeatedly passed her over for promotions in favour of less qualified men.

She said bias against women was widespread – that were women were often interrupted and excluded from important meetings and that their judgement was “much more likely to be called into question than men's”.

Woman, complained that supervisors were much harsher on female employees during performance reviews. Supervisors praised men for being assertive, but women were scolded for the same behaviour.

However, results of an internal equal pay study in April 2016, revealed that for women at Microsoft earn 99.8 cent for every \$1 earned by men with the same job title and level.

The study suggests that Microsoft is providing fair remuneration, but is not equal, fair and justice on basis of gender and race. ^[10]

5. A crowdsourced data of nearly 400 employees of Microsoft, revealed that engineers working in India were paid far less than their Washington counterparts. The typical Indian coder makes less than \$50,000 per year, while Americans with similar

experience make \$150,000 per year with up to 10 times as much compensation in bonuses. ^[18]

UNITY OF DIRECTION

1. In the early 1975s, each functional department though working towards the same project weren't co-operating towards the same plan, rather specializing and performing tasks limited to their departmental goals. ^[14]

After the advent of divisional structure, each division now operates as a kind of company within a company since it is equipped with all the functions necessary to accomplish its specific mission. The objectives of its directors are easily cascaded from the strategic objective of the company. Objective of each function of is established according to criteria specific to each unit's specialty. ^[20]

ORDER

1. During 2010 Microsoft, was leading towards financial losses. One of it's cause was improper tailoring of the financial Information systems according to a common financial reporting standard. People in corporate finance, had to spend a large amount of time to harmonize diverse data which led to the management team making decisions with outdated financial data.

Thus, people in an organization needed to follow a common protocol to track financial information in order to maintain material order. To harmonize this, the then Chief operating officer of Microsoft created a single, global financial reporting system and stored all data in a central data warehouse generated by a simple Web-Based software.

Thus, Microsoft enforced the application of material order principle, which has led to higher efficiency, drastic reduction in the number of financial information systems and databases and well as the IT Staff needed to support them. ^[2]

2. To simplify and standardize the resource procurement process, Microsoft has two systems: MSMarket (Where employees order the supply they need) and MSInvoice (Where suppliers send their bills).

This has significantly reduced staffing needs, helps in generating significant volume discounts and save of nearly \$190 million. ^[2]

3. Microsoft implements a companywide human resource management Information system to track workers by geographical division, business unit or function. Thus, implementing Social Order leading to easy tracking of employee's and ease in HR management. ^[2]

INITIATIVE

1. Microsoft, each year holds election for the 'Microsoft Most Valuable Professional (MVP)' status, which entitles them to a sort of special social status and possibilities for awards and other benefits. Thus, Microsoft encourages and rewards those, who take actions towards community growth, offer technical support to employees and team members and contribute to the organization as a whole. ^[1]
2. Employee's and Team leaders are provided with meeting opportunities with higher management where they can discuss Ideas, suggest modification. Extra hours are essentially padded to the general meeting hours, where the initial hours are spent on Key matters, and latter hours are spent on brainstorming ideas. ^[2]
3. Microsoft is deliberately creating a growth-mindset culture and rethinking its approach to development. As a result, previously unidentified – yet skilled – leaders are rising to levels they might not have in a traditional development model.

Microsoft's annual hackathon offers employees the chance to step outside their day jobs and develop leadership skills. ^[3]

4. Microsoft ensures that smart risks are encourages and rewarded, as long as they yield insights that propel the business forward.

For e.g, Microsoft's 'HoloLens Project', which essentially defined holographic computing. It began as a "moon-shot" goal with significant risk of failure. Team members had to welcome that risk and the chance to learn as they joined a cause "to put technology on a more human path". The gamble paid off, and Microsoft responded with recognition and rewards for learning quickly through faster trial and error.

In the process, people who had a clear sense of purpose and an appetite for risk emerged as incredible leader. In fact, many of the leaders who joined the team progressed more quickly than average to senior-level roles. ^[4]

FAIR RENUMERATION

1. Microsoft has its employee evaluation and reward systems. Managers provide employees with numerical performance ratings. Employees with high rating receive aggressive salary increases and those with low ratings get below-average raises and are helped with strategies for improving their performance.
2. Microsoft gives high reward for high performance with the focus on a partnership. It's reward systems, not only reward employee's for current achievement but rewards stocks to those who are seen as valuable future assets of the company. ^[11]
3. There are two reward paths available, one of those following the technical path and one for those following the management path. The skills of employees can be divided into three areas: conceptual skills, human skills and technical skills. Typically, conceptual skills become more required as one moves up the corporate ladder.

Microsoft is a company valuing technical skills, due to the nature of its product. In most organizations, employees with conceptual skills would be rewarded by moving up the corporate ladder, while those with technical skills would not advance. Microsoft, however, offers two advancement paths, allowing those with technical skills to advance as technical experts, just as those with conceptual skills advance as managers. ^[11]

4. Apart from salary Microsoft employees are rewarded with various benefits such as Car lease policy, Employee Stock purchase plan, Tuition Assistance, Family health insurance, Maternity and Paternity paid leaves, international trips and Vacation policies.

Apart from that Microsoft provided various in-office facilities such as 24X7 Gym with shower facility, Yoga and Relaxation room, weekly Zumba classes, Transportation facilities from home, free access to libraries.

The above remunerations apart from salary helps in providing Fair remuneration along with a work-life balance to the employees. ^[13]

STABILITY OF TENURE

1. In July 2014, Microsoft announced plans to lay off 18,000 employees. Microsoft employed 127,104 people as of June 5, 2014, making this about 14% reduction of its workforce. In October 2014, Microsoft announced another 7,800 job cuts in the next several months. In May 2016, Microsoft announced another 1,850 job cuts, as a result of which the company recorded an impairment and restructuring charge of approximately \$950 Million.

This suggest that Microsoft, in times of tough situation failed at providing Job Security to its employees and hence violated the principle. ^[1]

2. Microsoft is however committed to retaining good employees. Apart from regular remunerations, Stock options are awarded to employee who are considered long-term asset of the company.

To ensure proper recruitment, the recruiters at Microsoft not just inform the new employee the positive aspects of the employment, but also test the employee on the negative aspect, putting them under the same type of pressure they would be put under on the job.

Hiring inters and providing them pre-placement offers is an effective method, as during the internship period it can be ascertained, that if the employee is successful in the selection process, they will be successful within the organization. ^[11]

3. Not that long after Satya Nadella became the CEO, a formal change was instituted to encourage internal mobility in which employees are no longer required to seek permission from their current manager in order to interview for new positions, nor they are required to tell their current manager that they are doing so unless they have an offer from a new team that they intend to accept.

The only restriction is that employees are required to have been in their current position for at least 18 months before attempting another transfer. However, hiring managers do have access to the employee's prior performance, review, comments and results and thereby, before switching teams it is ensured that the employee has shown a clearly improving track record in their present position over a reasonable period of time. ^[12]

4. Microsoft Believes that Skilling and availability of education goes hand in hand. Instead of sending employees elsewhere to get training, Microsoft provided training and certifications as part of their employee's jobs. ^[16]

SCALAR CHAIN

- Initially during its Start-up stage, Microsoft operated in a “**Horizontal Management Structure**” (flat organizational structure) where there were no levels of management between management and staff level employees as Bill gates wanted to create a family work environment. Thus, it was a ‘**Short chain of command**’.
[14]
- As Microsoft expanded, it stated having ‘**Tall Structure**’ with ‘**longer chain of command**’ where Bill Gates and Paul Allen sat on the top of the organization structure as co-founders with a ‘**wider span-of-control**’ where there are comparatively a greater number of subordinates under a manager. [14]



Img III : Interactive Organization Chart for Microsoft

SUB-ORDINATION OF INDIVIDUAL INTEREST TO GROUP INTEREST

1. When Microsoft imposed new management systems, managers tend to drift away from the standard practice, modifying procedures and implementing them in their own way. However, in the end there was reconciliation because the system simplified the task of employee's and was extremely easy to use.

Also, to ensure reconciliation and that each and every person of the organization works towards the greater interest, Microsoft resulted at providing stock options to their employee's tenure and performance. [2]

2. Microsoft employ people who specifically will be motivated by the environment they provide. The employ intelligent and driven individuals and give them the environment and the opportunity to develop beyond their current level.

Microsoft ensures that the goals of the organization are understood via its strong culture and by employees being clearly aware of what is required of them. Microsoft ensures this by incorporating their goals into their human resource management programs. It provides its people with opportunities to grow, be creative, and acquire training for challenging assignments and advancement.

Microsoft hires the very best people, for these people to achieve self-actualization they need to be pushed harder than most and given greater opportunity to achieve than most. [11]

ESPIRIT De' CORPS

1. Microsoft uses 'Yammer' as a channel for their leaders to engage with employees. Employees can pose questions and connect with other employees on matters pertaining from product strategy to employee benefits. This helps bolster a sense of community and creates a direct connect between employees and leadership. [3]
2. Every day, the HR division drives a survey called the 'Daily Pulse' – to take a snapshot of how employees and feeling about the company, its culture, and other timely topic. The 'Daily Pulse' consists of approximately 20 core questions and up to five organization specific question. This aims at providing more regular insights into employee sentiment and making organizational changes. [3]

3. Every month, Microsoft holds an employee town hall meeting where company priorities, progress, and culture are discussed in open forum. During the event, employee engagement is measure to capture real-time sentiment. ^[3]
4. Microsoft performs various events to demonstrate Corporate Social responsibility with actively engaging its employees. Eg. Through their software donation program, which reaches groups in more than 100 countries, Microsoft make software available free of charge to all non-profit organizations that use technology to address social and civic issues.

The employees of Microsoft are committed to closing the opportunity gap that many young people face, and they arrange a number of programs dedicated to teaching students the skills necessary to harness the power of technology. This affects majorly by aligning team spirit and harmony amongst the workers at Microsoft. ^[7]

5. Employee loyalty and satisfaction is also assisted by Microsoft's consideration of its young employees. The latest attempt is by providing greater opportunity for younger employees, by having older employees coach them.

Three aspects of tasks that affect job satisfaction are job complexity, degree of physical strain and perceived value of the task. Microsoft manages this by providing the high complexity high achievers require and by ensuring the perceived value of the task is high. The high value is communicated via the high-achieving culture the company maintains.

The above case showcases the development of informal relations as well as a conscious development of task significance following 'Espirit De' Corps'. ^[11]

6. Before 2010, Microsoft has a management system known as "stack ranking" – a program that forces every unit to declare a certain percentage of employees as top performers, good performers, average, and poor.

Stack ranking was however later proved to be crippling Microsoft's ability to innovate. Microsoft employees cited it as the most destructive process inside of Microsoft. This led to employee focusing on competing with each other rather than competing with other companies.

This also shifted the focus of employee's to focussing on technology that would help the company make more money, performing the tasks that would make the managers happy, instead of focussing on new ideas and innovative technologies, hampering the creative potential of it's employees. ^[17]

CENTRALIZATION AND DE-CENTRALIZATION

1. In early 1999, the top management of Microsoft Corporation undertook a comprehensive, system-wide restructuring of the company. The company reorganization was initiated to shift the focus of the company from being product-oriented to being consumer-oriented.

The Company was reorganized into different core divisions on the basis of the target customer groups served, namely Information technology managers, knowledge workers, software developers and consumers.

Restructuring was undertaken to counter the frustration felt with the growing bureaucracy in the company by many of Microsoft's employees. By creating a new structure, Gates and Ballmer sought to reinvigorate the company by giving its employees greater responsibility of decision making in their jobs. In the original structure all decisions were taken by Gates and Ballmer.

The new structure sought to give the upper management a freer hand in running their divisions. Thus, de-centralization of decision making was implemented, to give higher level managers a more challenging and personally rewarding work environment. ^[4]

2. Earlier (Pre 2010) Microsoft disposed a lot of decision making to lower levels of management in sectors excluding sales and product development. This led to high resistance while new standardized systems were being introduced.

The best example of this scenario, is the general manager of German subsidiary building up its own financial and technical information systems, which led to increased hiring and chaos in decision making. ^[2]

3. With the advent of Product Division based organizational Structure (Post 2010), the main decisions were still central and were taken by top-level managers as the high-level authority feels they operate in a stable environment. Lower level managers are not as capable or experienced as making decision in comparison to higher level administration. ^[14]

OPINIONS & CONCLUSIONS

1. Division of Labour Principle is followed by Microsoft, in a very systematic matter by following “product type divisional” organizational structure. Even for a Single task, such as Software engineering – employees are ranked at different levels according to their experience, knowledge, rating and metrics of performance capabilities which leads to sub-division of tasks amongst its employees.

The divisional structure promotes decentralization of decisions, minimization of internal conflicts, better division of Labour & extensive focus on product development. However, this autonomy also has a drawback as it can lead to a desire for independence, or a revolt of some unit. Another disadvantage is its minimal consideration for regional market differences. Thus, a recommendation is for the company to integrate regional market differences in its organizational structural design.

2. Discipline Principle is followed by Microsoft by its Rating system, which is transparent and helps the manager as well as the employee have a constant check on his performance on the task allotted to him.
3. The Principle of Equity is not properly followed at Microsoft. This has led to poor diversification and high attrition rates.

Microsoft needs to assure that its leadership is not engaging in practices such as racial discrimination, regional based discrimination (Based on country and other geographical factors), and sex based discrimination.

However, Microsoft is actively trying to improve upon these situation by implementing various steps such as increased black representation in its workforce, providing fair opportunities of growth to its long and short term employees on a fair basis, increasing the pay for women, and creating an open environment for reporting these types of unfair actions.

4. In a broad sense of view, Microsoft is extensively focusing on successful implementation of Unity of Direction through its ‘Divisional Structure’ where all departments pertaining to separate product lines act as an independent organization with their own set of goals and objective.
5. Microsoft has been highly successful in implementing the Principle of Order throughout its organization by using Information Systems to keep tracks of important data pertaining to company’s financial information, resource procurement done by employee’s and Human Resource Management.

6. The Principle of Initiative is properly followed at Microsoft. Employee's taking Initiative towards community growth, innovative product development and are actively promoting a growth orientated risk-taking mindset approach towards business development, are provided recognition, awards and remunerations.
7. The principle of Fair remuneration is consistently being followed at Microsoft.

Though employees are being provided with competitive salaries and stock options, these are restricted by factors such as age, sex, race and geographical location of the employee.

Apart from the financial aspect, other remunerations (Excluding base salary pay & Stock Options) such as tuition fee, health insurance, vacation policies are provided fairly to all employees.

However, based on our analysis, we would suggest Microsoft to improve upon the Work Life balance for its employees. Employees though remunerated fairly, are made to work overtime decreasing their productivity and increasing their stress level.

8. There is no absolute centralization, nor decentralization at any organization. However, through our analysis we can say that, Microsoft is more centralized due to its belief that the decisions taken by high-level administration are more stable.
9. The Principle of Espirit De' Corps is effectively applied at Microsoft. It actively engages in developing a sense of community amongst its employees by conducting surveys, sharing daily news feeds around the workplace, conducting recreational events and most importantly actively engaging in CSR activities.
10. Microsoft focuses on sub-ordination of individual interest to group interest by hiring out individuals that are not only intelligent, but also emotionally driven towards the organizational goals.

Its human resource management programs, as well as regular surveys about any policy that may be newly implemented, helps to track employee sentiments and satisfaction.
11. In a broad sense of view, Microsoft has a 'Tall Organizational Structure' with a very 'long chain of command' with 'span of control' widening at each level. However, Microsoft actively tries to follow the Principle of scalar chain through out the organization by a scalar chain of decision-making and reporting.
12. Over the past decades, Microsoft has not been able to follow the principle of Stability of Tenure properly.

The major cause is due to its organizational changes which has led to multiple layoffs. Though this may be an advantageous move in the long run, it may hamper the sentiments and trust of the employees present at the organization.

The Company should be managed well and should be very particular while hiring an employee. Proper recruitment should be ensured and employees should be viewed as long-term assets, and must be actively involved in the long term growth of the organization by providing them a growing workplace, fair remuneration and providing them with company Stock Options.

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