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Weisbord's Six-Box Model

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Entrepreneurs:

Weisbord's Six-Box Model Is Here

A framework developed by Marvin Weisbord, this model is one that can help you to accurately assess the functioning of your organization. One of the advantages of using this specific model is its ability to adapt to just about any business that you happen to be in.



The model is meant for use 'across the board', so you should find it helpful regardless of your field. The six boxes that are alluded to in the title refer to the following –

- Purposes
- Structure
- Relationships
- Rewards
- Leadership
- Helpful Mechanisms

To allow you to gain a better understanding of this six-box model and how it can help you understand your organization, we have highlighted each of the six points below.

Purposes

This is a very general piece of the puzzle to get started, but it is an important one nonetheless. You need to understand very specifically what businesses you are in, and what businesses you want to be in moving forward.



While that might seem like a somewhat obvious point, it could be a little more complicated than you think once you get into it. For instance, if you have developed a customer base that is somewhat outside of the target market you initially laid out for your products, you might find that your company is competing in an arena that is slightly unexpected. Business frequently takes unexpected turns, so stay on top of your organization by understanding exactly where you are competing and what it takes to win in those areas.

Structure

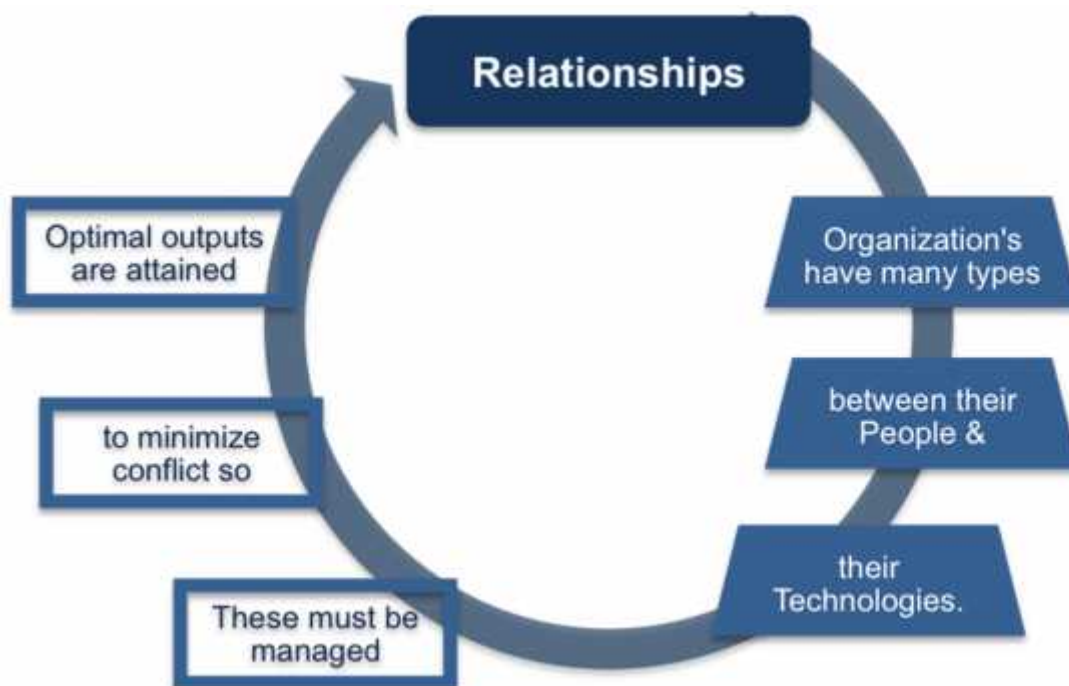
Moving on to the next point starts to get into the details of how your business operates and how it works on a daily basis. The structure of the organization will have a lot to say about what you are able to produce, and at what cost you are able to produce it. Who is responsible for doing what within the company? How is the work that each person is doing going to contribute to the greater good of selling quality products for low prices to customers? Structuring your business in a logical way based on the desired outputs you have in mind is one of the most important things you can do going forward. Many businesses have been derailed by poor organization even if they have good products and innovative ideas.



The lesson is clear – don't take this point for granted. Work hard on your business structure and you will likely be rewarded for your efforts.

Relationships

Business is a never ending stream of relationships. There are the obvious relationships between people both within your organization and outside of it that need to be managed. Also, there are the relationships between your people and your technologies that need to be successfully managed in order to achieve optimal outputs.



When you have inevitable conflicts in some of these relationships – either between people, or between people and machines – you need to have a clear and concise plan for how those conflicts are going to be resolved. It isn't a matter of completely avoid conflict, as conflict is going to happen one way or another, but it is more a matter of knowing how to handle it

effectively when it arises. Healthy relationships are required for business growth, so don't sit idle when there are connections that need to be mended.

Rewards

Most people function best when offered some form of reward for their efforts. Obviously, a pay check is a natural reward in a work setting, but you often need to go beyond just a salary in order to get the best from your people.



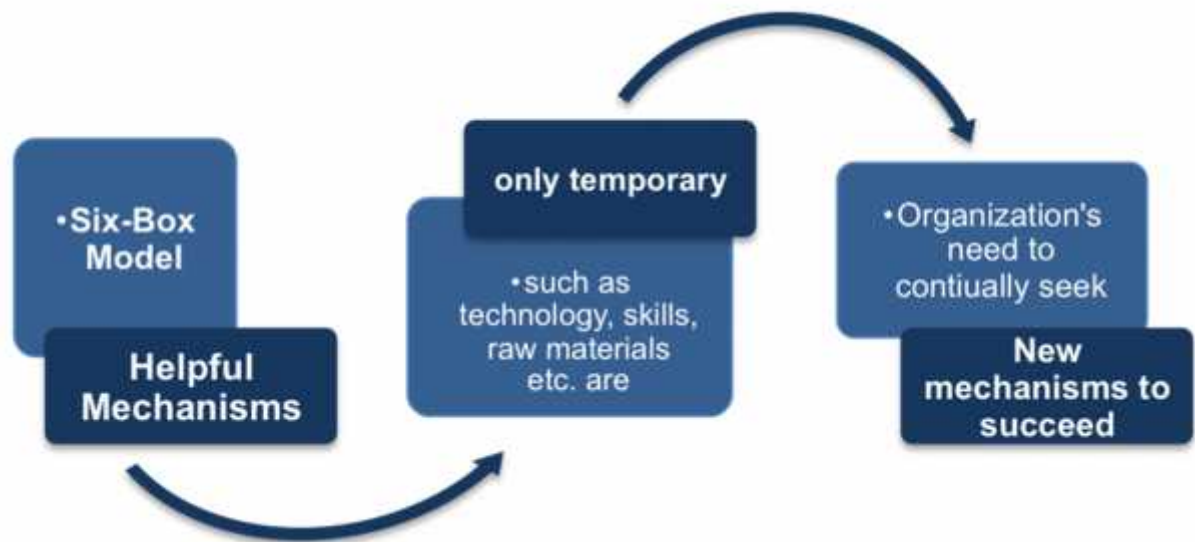
When you are asking your teams to work hard for the good of the organization as a whole, those people need to feel invested in some way in their work. If all of the profits and accolades are going to ownership and upper management, what motivation is there for the rest of the team to work hard day in and day out? Creating a structure of worthy rewards is one of the most important things managers can do to develop a positive culture that runs from top to bottom in the business.

Leadership

Speaking of a positive culture, leadership is another important piece of the organizational puzzle. When you have strong leadership in place, it helps everyone else go about their work each day with a sense of confidence and purpose. Of course, it should be noted that strong leadership doesn't have to mean ruling the company 'with an iron fist'. Rather, it is often better to be an understanding and caring leader, working as a part of the team rather than being removed from it in a distant corner office.

Helpful Mechanisms

Having in place the technologies and other pieces of the puzzle that make the organization work is essential to your success. These mechanisms are certain to change over time as technology improves and markets advance accordingly, so you will want to stay on top of the things that you are using to be efficient and competitive. What was once considered to be a ‘helpful mechanism’ could quickly fall out of date and become a liability to your business. Don’t just assume that something which was once helpful is going to remain so for years to come – technology changes quickly, and those companies that fail to keep up with it will usually wind up looking up at the competition as it pulls away.



Taking the time to go through the six-box model as it relates to your organization is a useful exercise that could yield a number of interesting and revealing discoveries. One of the most common mistakes in business is assuming that you already know everything there is to know about the way your business operates and the way it competes in the market.

Unfortunately, that is rarely the case. More likely, you have a lot to learn, just like everyone else, and the six-box model can help you in that quest. Work hard on each of the six points in this model and you will come out on the other side with a sound understanding of how your business works and what it is you can do to stay competitive over the long run.

Key Points

- The six-box model is a generic framework developed by the American analyst Marvin Weisbord to assess the functioning of organizations.
- The six-boxes that make up the model are: Purposes, structure, relationships, rewards, leadership, and helpful mechanisms.
- Purposes: Do organizational members agree with and support the organization's mission and goals?
- Structure: Is there a fit between the purpose and the internal structure of the organization?
- Relationships: What type of relations exist between individuals, between departments, and between individuals and the nature of their jobs? Is their interdependence? What is the quality of relations? What are the modes of conflict?
- Rewards: What does the organization formally reward, and for what do organizational members feel they are rewarded and punished? What does the organization need to do to fit with the environment?
- Leadership: Do leaders define purposes? Do they embody purposes in their programs? What is the normative style of leadership?
- Helpful Mechanisms: Do these mechanisms help or hinder the accomplishment of organizational objectives?
- One of the most common mistakes in business is assuming that you already know everything there is to know about the way your business operates and the way it competes in the market.
- Taking the time to go through Weisbord's six-box model as it relates to your organization is a useful exercise that could yield a number of interesting and revealing discoveries.

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