**Walmart Organizational Change**

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**Introduction**

Every organization will go through a change or transition in order to remain relevant in the industry. Whether the change involves merging with another firm, growing a department, or bringing onboard new employees, changes in an organization will have a significant effect on the trajectory of the business. In that context, organizational change may be defined as the process through which a company moves from a given state of affairs to a different one. It is important to note that organizational change may assume various forms. For example, it may involve changing the company's culture, technology, procedures, policies, strategy, or structure. Organizational change of any kind may be radical and alter the way a firm operates. It may also be incremental, whereby it will slowly change how things are done in the organization. Either way, regardless of the type of change, it will entail leaving behind the old ways and adopting new and better practices. Organizational change is, therefore, an essential aspect of any organization. It is imperative that a firm develops adaptability to change, or it might be left behind or even swept away by the strong forces of change. In a progressive culture, organizational change will be inevitable. Modern companies are highly adaptive, versatile, and dynamic to the multiplicity of changes. Organizational change may be necessitated by external (e.g., social/political changes, market situation, change in equipment and technology) or internal (deficiencies in the current organization, changes in managerial personnel) pressures. Change is inevitable in any organization that wants to remain competitive. This paper looks at how Walmart can effect change in terms of customer service using Kotter's eight-step change model.

**Company Overview**

Walmart Inc. is a US multinational retail corporation operating a chain of grocery stores, discount department stores, and hypermarkets. The company has its headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas. Today, Walmart boasts of being the largest company globally when we talk in revenue terms. It is also considered to be the largest private employer globally. Walmart mainly engages in the wholesale and retail business. Customers are offered various products and services at affordable prices. The company conducts its operations through various business segments such as Sam's Club, Walmart International, and Walmart US. The Walmart US business segment mainly functions as the merchandiser of multiple products. It operates under the Walmart Neighborhood, Wal-Mart, and the Walmart market brands, in addition to Walmart.com among other eCommerce brands. The business segment classified as Walmart international mainly manages warehouse clubs, hypermarkets, supermarkets, supercenters, and cash and carry in areas outside the US. The last business segment, known as Sam's Club, is made up of members-only warehouse clubs and samsclubs.com. Walmart was founded in 1945 by Samuel Moore Walton and James Lawrence Walton (CNN Business, 2021).

Walmart started many years ago as a small discount-offering store with the simple idea of selling more to buyers for less. Today, the company has grown immensely over the last five decades to become the world's largest retailer. Millions of customers visit Walmart's stores on a daily basis all over the world. The company has continued to be a leader when it comes to employment opportunities, corporate philanthropy, and sustainability. They have an unwavering commitment to create opportunities and bring more value to communities and customers worldwide.

Many would regard Walmart as an unstoppable retail force today. In a nutshell, Walmart is the number one retailer in the world, as well as the largest company in terms of revenue. The company sells general merchandise and groceries. It operates about 5400 outlets in the United States, including approximately 4800 Walmart stores. There are also about 600 Sam's membership-only warehouse clubs. In terms of global reach, the company has about 6000 locations and operates through numerous regional subsidiaries. Walmart is the number one retailer in Mexico and Canada. It has operations in Latin America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. Each week, approximately 265 million customers visit the company's websites and stores (Vault.com, 2021).

**Diagnosis**

Customer service has to do with the support a company offers its customers. This is both before and after the customers buy and use the company's services and products, thus helping the customers have an enjoyable and easy experience with the company or business. For a company such as Walmart to retain its customers and grow business, it is advisable to offer outstanding customer service. Today, customer service is more than the traditional phone support agents. It is being provided through social media, text messages, the web, and email. Many firms have also provided self-service support systems, thus making it possible for clients to find their own answers at any time. For a company to compete effectively, it is vital to invest in customer service. Excellent customer service/support results in a fantastic consumer experience.

For a company such as Walmart, it does not matter how great their services or products are. If their customer service is poor, customers will complain and possibly leave the company. Fortunately, it is possible for a company to turn things around in case of challenges in customer service. However, the process will take some time for results to be attained. There must be a serious commitment to organizational change, a dedicated team, and support from top management. Through customer service, both existing and prospective customers are provided with support. This entails customer service professionals in a company answering any questions that customers have.

When a large number of customers stop doing business with a firm due to a bad experience, it means there is a need to approach the issue with a lot of seriousness. Revenue will be generated by good customer service. Also, good customer service will give customers a cohesive and complete experience that aligns with the company's purpose. It is said that companies lose billions of dollars due to poor customer service. That being said, it is crucial to possess crucial skills in customer including creativity and innovation, problem solving skills, good communication skills, emotional intelligence, attentiveness, patience, products knowledge, ability to read the customers, and persuasion.

As earlier stated, customer service entails taking care of your customers' needs through the provision and delivery of high quality, helpful, and professional service before, during, and after meeting the customers' requirements. Therefore, customer service is where we meet the desires and needs of customers. Good customer service has characteristics such as promptness, politeness, professionalism, and personalization. As a company, Walmart has not achieved optimal customer service. Walmart customers do not believe they come first at the company. This has made the largest retailer in the world rank last in their customers' opinions in terms of customer service (PYMNTS.com, 2016). A survey conducted by the American Customer Satisfaction Index on 8700 people revealed that overall customer satisfaction with various retail outlets dropped 1.4% in the year 2014. This was after about three years of steady improvement, partly as a result of increasing prices of products. Some of these stores, such as Walmart, attained their worst rating on customer satisfaction since 2007 (Market Watch, 2015). In 2015 customer ratings from consumers, Walmart came dead last. This was despite numerous efforts by Doug McMillon's (chief executive) attempts to create a better relationship with shoppers (Klausner, 2016).

**Kotter's 8-Step approach**

As discussed above, it is evident that Walmart has not succeeded in fully addressing the issue of customer service. Poor customer service can have a negative impact on a company such as Walmart. These include damaged reputation, loss of customers, leads that don't convert, loss of the best employees, loss of profits, etc. It is possible to enact change in customer service at Walmart using Kotter's eight-step model. This model, developed by John Kotter, clearly explains the process a leader can follow in order to effectively lead change in an organization (Tanner, 2021). The eight steps of Kotter's model include:

**Creating a sense of urgency**- For any change to happen, it will be helpful if the entire organization wants the change. This brings us to the first step in the model, i.e., developing a sense of urgency regarding the need for change in the company (Tanner, 2021). This might be helpful in sparking the initial motivation necessary to get things going. This is not just a matter of showing people negative customer reviews or decreased profits. There must be a compelling and honest dialogue about what is currently happening in the company and entire industry. Walmart can use measures such as identifying the existing threat or problem and developing scenarios indicating what might happen in the future. The company could also examine any opportunities that can be exploited. At this point, it is vital for Walmart to start honest discussions on the issue, in addition to giving convincing and dynamic reasons to get stakeholders thinking and talking.

**Creating the leading coalition**- The second step entails forming a powerful coalition. Here, the idea is convincing all stakeholders that the change is vital and necessary (Tanner, 2021). It is not enough to manage change; we must lead it. A good approach here would be finding effective change leaders throughout the company. Leading change will often require bringing together a team or coalition of influential individuals whose power emanates from various sources such as political importance, expertise, status, job title, etc. For Walmart, this second step can be actualized by identifying the true and influential leaders in the company and other crucial stakeholders. Also, emotional commitment can be sourced from the key people. Working on team building within the change coalition is crucial, in addition to checking the team for any weak areas.

**Introducing a change strategy and vision**- When a leader first starts thinking about a particular change, there tends to be great solutions or ideas. Such concepts have to be linked to the company’s overall vision that everyone can capture quickly and recall (Tanner, 2021). Introducing a vision that is clear will help every person in the company understand fully why they are being requested to do a certain thing or accept change. If you help people see and embrace what is to be achieved, then it means that any instructions given will make even more sense. Walmart can approach the stage by finding out the key values that are central or crucial to the desired change.

**Communicating the change vision**- Desired success will be mostly determined by what you do with the vision after creating it. Communicating the vision powerfully and frequently is important. This means that the company should not rely on special meetings to communicate the vision (Tanner, 2021). It should be communicated at all times. The vision should be used daily at Walmart to make decisions and solve various problems. When the vision is kept fresh on people's minds, it becomes easy to remember it and respond appropriately. Walmart can ensure this stage is successful by talking often about the vision and applying the vision to all aspects of company operations.

**Empowering broad-based action/removing obstacles**- It is common for obstacles to emerge in the change process. For example, people might resist the proposed change. Also, structures or processes might get in the way (Tanner, 2021). It is therefore advisable to ensure there is a structure for desired change and regularly check for any existing barriers. If Walmart succeeds in removing obstacles, people will be empowered to execute the vision. This will, in turn, help the change progress forward. For this stage to be successful, Walmart will involve change leaders whose main role is delivering the change. It may also be helpful to identify those against the change and enable them to see what is needed. Lastly, Walmart should take action quickly to remove any obstacles.

**Generating short-term wins**- Success is a major motivating factor. It is, therefore, crucial to give Walmart at least a taste of success or victory early in the company’s change process. It means having some quick or short-term wins that people can see (Tanner, 2021). Failure to do this might result in progress being hurt by critics and negative thinkers. Short-term targets should be created, such as improving customer service reviews.

**Consolidating gains and implementing more change/building on the desired change**- Kotter has argued that a change project may fail because of various reasons, for example declaring victory too early. However, real change usually tends to run deep. Short-term or quick wins are just the beginning of what must be done to realize long-term change in the company (Tanner, 2021). This calls for consolidating gains and implementing more change. This will entail a series of actions intended to prevent Walmart from sliding into complacency. Each success will present a great opportunity for the company to build on areas that went right and point out what needs to be improved. Walmart can implement this step by ensuring that after each win, there is a careful analysis of what went right and what needs to be improved. The company can also set goals to keep on building on the momentum already achieved.

**Anchoring change in the culture**- The last step entails making the change stick. In other words, the change must be part of the core of Walmart. Continuous efforts should be made to ensure that the introduced change is visible in all aspects of the organization (Tanner, 2021). This action will ensure the change has a solid place in Walmart's culture. At this point, it is paramount that Walmart's leaders continue supporting the change. This will include new leaders and existing staff who might be brought in. this step can be best implemented by talking about progress all the time. Success stories about the change should be told. Also, the change in values and ideals should be included when Walmart is hiring or training new employees.

**Conclusion**

Change is inevitable in any organization, regardless of size. It may entail changing a company's culture, technology, procedures, policies, strategy, or structure. Any change will usually entail abandoning old ways and adopting new ways of doing things, with the objective of improving the company. Walmart is a company that has an excellent reputation in areas such as employment and social responsibility. However, the company has not succeeded in its customer service. Unless this problem is addressed, it might cost the company dearly. Fortunately, it is possible for Walmart to implement change in terms of customer service. This will enable the company to turn things around and secure benefits such as more customers and increased profits.

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