

SUPPLIER PARTICIPATION IN STRATEGY WORKSHOPS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose

The purpose of this article is to describe and analyze how strategic work between a buyer and a seller can be improved and deepened using strategy workshops linked to the framework of strategy as practice.

Design/methodology/approach

Building upon Whittington's early work strategy as practice has emerged as an important theoretical field aiming at answering questions on who develops strategy, what they focus on and with which help and how they do (Whittington, 1996). A significant part of this field is strategy workshops. Several scholars have concluded that more research on workshops is needed but see clear evidence of successfully managed workshops as being an important part of the strategic work in the involved organizations (e.g. Hodgkinson, Whittington, Johnson & Schwarz, 2006). It has also been noted that there is a need for more research with plurality in terms of level of analysis, plurality of actors, plurality of dependent variables and as well as plurality of theories (Johnson, Langley, Melin, & Whittington, 2007). The research is based upon the study of three strategic workshops held between a seller and two buying organizations. The research also include a pre-study with interviews as well as follow-up interviews.

Findings

The paper illustrates that within a buyer-seller relationship a lot of strategic discussion can take place and there is indeed important practitioners (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009) to be found also among external parties, such as suppliers. Contrary to the claims of Hodgkinson et al, (2006) we see the in this case involvement of both external stakeholders as well as internal stakeholder representing a variety of functions and level as a success factor in the workshop thus making a contribution to the strategy as practice field as well as to supplier development.

Research limitations/implications

The research is based upon a case from the nuclear industry which in some aspects is a very rigours industry and also is highly regulated.

Practical implications

The case studied here clearly illustrate that strategy workshops is a well-functioning tool for strategic discussions and supplier development. The strategy workshops need to include both participators from the buying firm as well as from the selling firms since the success of any strategic decisions will rely upon the actions from both parties.

Social implications

The research presented highlights the importance of new ways of cooperation between buyers and sellers also on the in the top management levels and is therefore also of interest to different trade and industry organizations working with help and advice to their members.

Original/value

In the article the strategy of practice field is linked to the purchasing and supply management field adding to both knowledge about strategy workshops and supplier development. The case is from a very interesting sector, namely the nuclear industry.

Keywords: purchasing, supply management, strategy as practice, strategy workshops, supplier development.

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