



PRODUCTIVITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR ASSOCIATED FOODS ZIMBABWE (PVT) LTD

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Abstract

The research investigated the academic qualifications, job competencies and operations and distribution processes of the family businesses merged Associated Foods Zimbabwe (AFZ) in order to determine the growth requirements. The research's aim was to transform the AFZ into a competitive corporate business that can successfully compete locally, regionally and internationally. The survey and focus group methods were implemented to collect the research data. Most of the management staff members had minimum academic qualifications that were irrelevant to the job activities that they were performing. Most of the staff members required competence training for effective performance of their job activities in the ten Operations functions of the company. There was need to implement competence training, team building, continuous quality improvement and effective performance improvement strategies. The research suggested a competency budget training template for all associated costs that are necessary for successful planning and implementation of the programme.

Key words: Associated foods, productivity, quality improvement, management effectiveness

JEL: M1, M11-12

Paper Classification: Research Paper

Introduction

The AFZ manufactures and distributes quality and trusted spreads, canned fruits, tomato products and roasted nuts in Zimbabwe. The company started as two separate family businesses that merged in 2016 to form the AFZ corporate business. The AFZ strives to deliver customer needs and add value to the food industry through the provision of affordable, quality products manufactured through cost effective methods and procedures whilst ensuring that the interests of all company stakeholders are respected. The new developments in the company require new methods complimented with relevant competency skills in order to meet the vision of the corporate.

As family businesses merge for expansion from their entrepreneurial beginning, the expansion of the mission, strategies and tactics of the corporate, create unique performance and governance

challenges. According to Caspar, Dias and Elstrodt (2010), the merged family businesses tend to perform well over time when compared with their corporate peers. Their performance suggests that they have a story of interest not only to family businesses around the world, of various sizes and in various stages of development, but also to companies with other forms of ownership. To be successful as both the corporate company and the staff members grow, the new corporate business must meet two intertwined challenges, namely, achieving strong business performance and keeping the management staff members committed to and capable of carrying out their duties professionally and competently. The economy depends on the success of family owned businesses, but only one third of these organizations successfully transition to the second generation and only one in ten survive to the third generation (Andrews, 2010).

The AFZ is a merger of two previously run family businesses; Honeywood and Spread Valley. Each family business had its business mission, ethics and culture and was producing a different variety and quality of products. The merging of the two family businesses into an associated corporate demands the right competency skills for the various corporate activities; periodic review of the operations methods to continuously increase production of high quality products; a full integration of previously separate teams into a single highly skilled and competitive team; a continuous products quality improvement system; researches to identify and develop new products, production methods and markets and technologically driven logistics, distribution and production systems.

The AFZ management commissioned the research to Africa University, College of Business, Peace, Leadership and Governance's department of Business Sciences to investigate knowledge, skills and abilities that are available to successfully transform the new entity into a competitive corporate company on the local, regional and international markets. The research's aim was to transform the AFZ from family owned businesses to a merged competitive corporate business that produces products that can successfully compete on the local, regional and international markets. The main research objectives were to improve the productivity of the company in order to enhance its competitiveness and profitability; establish the gap between the available management competency skills and current jobs activities; determine ways of continuously improving the products quality through identifying training needs, quality improvement activities and continuous training of management staff members; and, establish a framework of improving the effectiveness of managing the merged corporate company.

Literature Review

The family businesses are often an overlooked form of ownership but they are most common in developing economies. Yet, they are all around us -from neighborhood mom-and-pop stores and the millions of small and medium sized businesses that underpin many economies to household names such as BMW, Samsung and Wal-Mart Stores. One-third of all companies in the S&P 500 index and 40 percent of the 250 largest companies in France and Germany are defined as family businesses, meaning that a family owns a significant number of the shares and can influence important decisions, particularly the election of the Chairman and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) (Caspar *et al.*, 2010). The initial findings of the research show that the AFZ corporate business is a merger of two family owned businesses that were operating in Zimbabwe.

Andrews (2010) categorized the business dimension into three stages based on the growth and complexity of the business, namely, Start-Up Expansion, Formalization and Maturity. The AFZ is going through these stages of growth and therefore demands special attention on competency training, good governance and continuous quality and productivity improvement. According to Chase, Aquilano and Jacobs (2001), the best operating level for a company is near 70% capacity. The productivity of the company can be improved by aligning staff academic qualifications and job activities (Kasika, 2015), applying Optimisation tools (Masiyazi, Chiteka, Dewa & Museka, 2014), using industrial engineering (IE) tools (Raut, Relekar & Dhane, 2014), measuring the material removal rate (Dalai, 2011) and implementing acceptance quality level (AQL) (Mohamad, Salehudin, Salleh & Mohamad, 2009). Sanders and Reid (2012) and Deros, Peng, Ab Rahman, Ismail and Sulong (2008) stated that acceptance sampling is an approach to sampling a lot in manufacturing in order to accept or reject the manufactured lot. Masiyazi *et al.*, (2014) applied the concepts of plant layout, reliability centered maintenance and computer integrated manufacturing (CIM) to improve production facilities and manufacturing support systems. According to Ng and Feldman (2009), academic qualifications are key in staff members' effectiveness in the performance of their tasks.

According to Bam (2018), the methods of improving the quality of the company products are value chain; identification of customer needs and requirements; managing demands and internal communications; training and technical assistance (training of the company's service channels; after sales service; and feedback. Chadoka and Murairwa (2018) developed a framework for measuring the efficiency of the distribution channels implemented to measure C&P Enterprise's distribution channels in Harare, Zimbabwe. The researchers found that all the C&P Enterprise's distribution channels were performing below the acceptable efficiency level. Brand (2017) stated that the process of a continuous product improvement, involves creating an original understanding of the quality cost, implementing automated statistical process control system and maintaining a high level of supply chain visibility. A company should perform regular analysis, strive for improved sustainability and utilize accurate labeling. Murairwa (2016a) encourages companies to reduce the number of production functions in order to optimise the company's profit and production cost. The service delivery companies in Zimbabwe were operating without the labour cost allocation methodology or labour cost cap policy (Murairwa, 2017). One of the suggestions made by Murairwa (2017) was that the companies should develop reliable and sustainable strategies for collecting production revenue.

Research gap

Most Zimbabwean companies were facing viability challenges emanating from the non-performing economy, staff inexperience and mismanagement (Murairwa, 2016b). In Zimbabwe, about 283 companies have liquidated from economic distress since 2009 (Mapakame, 2013). According to Nguwi (2013), most indigenous companies in Zimbabwe were failing due to weak financial, human capital management, governance systems, lack of funding and capacity. Food processing corporate companies, especially family owned businesses that were merging into corporate businesses were not spared. Most researchers (such as Murairwa, 2016b; Calkins, 2016; Downey & CIMA, 2009; Lin, Lee & Gibbs, 2008) are occupied with strategies for reviving failing companies while neglecting the need for a framework for sustaining merged family businesses that are operating in distressed economies.

Research Methodology

- (a) Research type: A descriptive survey method was used since one company was considered during the research. The research used both qualitative and quantitative data.
- (b) Research variables: This research applied Chadoka and Murairwa's (2018) approach to identify the research's variables and their interactions and presented them in Figure 1.

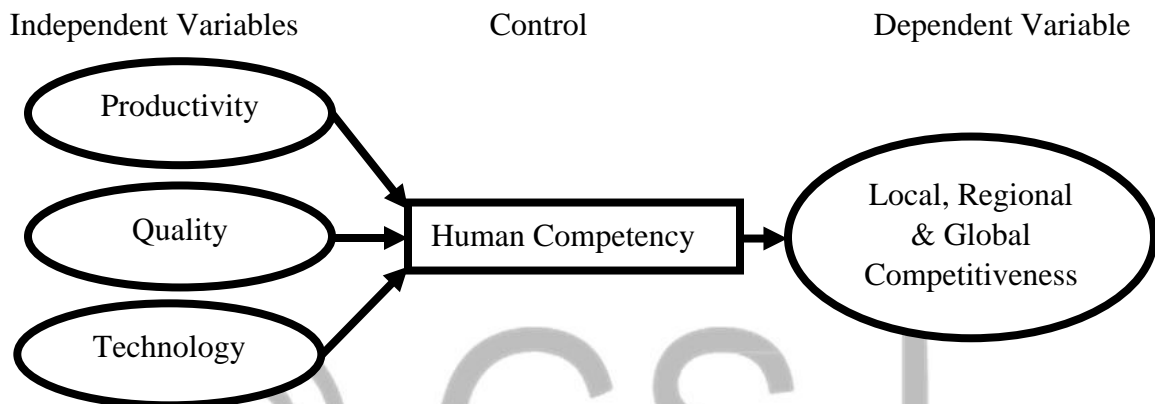


Figure 1: Interaction of the research variables

- (c) Research population: The research collected data from all 38 AFZ senior and junior management staff members.
- (d) Data collection: The research applied a three phased approach to gather data from all AFZ management staff members. The three phases (Ps) are:
 - P-1: Familiarization tour: A team from the Business Sciences Department (BSD) in the College of Business, Peace, Leadership and Governance (CBPLG) at Africa University visited the AFZ corporate business on the familiarization tour. The team was introduced to the production, logistics and distribution systems and all staff members who were on duty.
 - P-2: Questionnaire: A questionnaire was designed and tested to collect data from nineteen staff members who were not busy. The pilot data was analysed and used to develop the questionnaire that collected data that was analysed in this research. The questionnaires were distributed to the participants to complete while the researchers were waiting to collect the completed questionnaires.
 - P-3: Survey: A focus group for management staff was organized. During the discussion and question and answer session, the researchers gathered the research data. The BSD team scheduled another day for individual interviews of the management staff members.
- (e) Statistical Tools Used: The research computed joint probabilities of the responses by the participants. The probabilities were calculated with:

$$P(E_{ij}) = \frac{x_{ij}}{\sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^c x_{ij}}, \tag{1}$$

where r is the number of rows and m is the number of columns. The probabilities of the management staff members who volunteered to participate in competency training programmes were computed with:

$$P(E) = \frac{f}{n}, \tag{2}$$

where f and n are the number of management staff members who desired competency training in a special programme and participated in the survey respectively.

- (f) Ethical issues: The research and publication of the findings were authorized by the AFZ management.

Data Analysis and Findings

A total of 38 (24 Males and 14 Females) AFZ senior and junior management staff members participated in the research survey. The research discovered that 30% of the management staff members were not well versed with the corporate business’s strategic plan. The research learnt that the AFZ Corporate business originated from merging of two autonomous family owned businesses. It was also noted that the company was operating below the best capacity operating level of 70% as suggested by Chase, Aquilano and Jacobs (2001).The research identified ten major management duties that were being performed by the management staff members and these are administration; agronomy; distribution; engineering; finance; human resources; procurement; production; quality assurance and stores. The proportion distribution of the management staff members by department and working experience at AFZ is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Working Experiences and Department of Participants

Department	Working Experience (years)			Total
	0-2	3-5	>5	
Administration	0.00	0.00	5.26	5.26
Agronomy	5.26	0.00	0.00	5.26
Distribution	0.00	0.00	5.26	5.26
Engineering	0.00	0.00	10.53	10.53
Finance	0.00	0.00	5.26	5.26
Human Resources	5.26	0.00	0.00	5.26
Procurement	0.00	0.00	5.26	5.26
Production	0.00	5.26	21.05	26.32
Quality Assurance	5.26	0.00	15.79	21.05
Stores	0.00	0.00	10.53	10.53
Total	15.79	5.26	78.95	100.00

Table 1 shows that of all the management staff members who participated in the research survey, 78.95% had more than five years of working experience. Of all the participants, 21.05% and 26.32% were working in the Quality Assurance and Production departments respectively. The academic qualifications of the staff members by department are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of Management’s Academic Qualifications

Department	Qualification					Total
	None	O Level	A Level	Diploma	First Degree	
Administration	5.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.26
Agronomy	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.26	5.26
Distribution	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.26	5.26
Engineering	0.00	0.00	5.26	0.00	5.26	10.53
Finance	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.26	5.26
Human Resources	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.26	5.26
Procurement	0.00	0.00	5.26	0.00	0.00	5.26
Production	0.00	15.79	0.00	5.26	5.26	26.32
Quality Assurance	0.00	5.26	0.00	5.26	10.53	21.05
Stores	5.26	5.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.53
Total	10.53	26.32	10.53	10.53	42.11	100.00

Table 2 shows that most of the staff members had academic qualifications. Of all the thirty-eight management staff members who participated in this research survey, 52.64% had diplomas and degrees. The AFZ departments that were manned by university degree qualified managers were Agronomy, Distribution, Engineering, Finance, Human Resources, Production and Quality Assurance. Are these degrees and diplomas relevant to the staff members' current job activities? The percentage of staff members without academic or professional qualifications was 47.36% of all participants. This is so because the business was formed from merged two family businesses. The academic and/or professional qualifications are not necessary for one to start his/her own family business. According to Caspar *et al.* (2010), charity, one of the five attributes of enduring family businesses, is an important element in keeping families committed to the business, by providing meaningful jobs for family members who don't work in it and by promoting family values throughout generations. The assessment of the relevance of the degree qualifications to current job activities was performed and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Relevance of Degree Qualifications to Current Job Activities

Department	None Degree	Degree							Total
		Bio Chemistry	Psychology	Food Technology	Agriculture	Oncology	Vet Medicine	Mech Engineering	
Administration	5.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.26
Agronomy	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.26
Distribution	0.00	0.00	5.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.26
Engineering	5.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.26	10.53
Finance	0.00	0.00	5.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.26
Human Resources	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.26	0.00	0.00	5.26
Procurement	5.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.26
Production	21.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.26	0.00	26.32
Quality Assurance	10.53	5.26	0.00	5.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	21.05
Stores	10.53	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.53
Total	57.89	5.26	10.53	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	100.00

Table 3 shows that the Production and Human Resource departments were manned by the Veterinary Medicine and Oncology degrees qualified managers. On the other hand, 5.26% of the degreed participants with Psychology degree were working in Finance and Distribution departments. The same percentage of degreed participants with Agriculture degree were manning the Agronomy department. Thus, Table 3 shows a mismatch of academic qualifications and

current job activities except for agronomy. The research found that most of the management staff members with degrees that were irrelevant to their current job activities were willing to go through competency training in Change Management (CM); Corporate Communication (CC); Entrepreneurship (E); Financial Accounting for Non-Finance Managers (FA); Food Technology & Processing (FTP); Human Resources Management (HR); Information Technology (IT); Intellectual Property (IP); Procurement & Distribution (PD); Production & Operations (PO); Project Management (PM); Quality Control (QC); Risk Management (RM); and Statistical Control Tools (SCT). The distribution of the competency training needs in Administration (Admin), Agronomy (Agro), Distribution (Dist), Engineering (Engin), Finance (Fin), Human Resources (HR), Procurement (Proc), Production & Operations (PO), Quality Assurance (QA) and Stores (Store) Departments (Depts) is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Competency Training Needs for AFZ staff members

Dept	Training Needs													
	PO	HR	SCT	FTP	PM	PD	RM	CM	CC	IP	QC	FA	IT	E
Admin	0.00	5.26	5.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.26	5.26	5.26	0.00	0.00	5.26	5.26	0.00
Agro	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	0.00	5.26	5.26	5.26	0.00
Dist	0.00	0.00	5.26	0.00	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	0.00	0.00	5.26	5.26	0.00
Engin	10.53	5.26	10.53	10.53	10.53	0.00	10.53	10.53	10.53	0.00	10.53	10.53	10.53	0.00
Fin	5.26	5.26	5.26	0.00	5.26	0.00	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26
HR	5.26	5.26	5.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.26	5.26	5.26	0.00	5.26	5.26	5.26	0.00
Proc	5.26	0.00	5.26	0.00	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	5.26	0.00	0.00	5.26	5.26	0.00
PO	26.32	10.53	26.32	21.05	10.53	5.26	21.05	21.05	5.26	10.53	26.32	26.32	21.05	10.53
QA	15.79	10.53	21.05	10.53	15.79	0.00	21.05	21.05	15.79	0.00	21.05	21.05	21.05	10.53
Store	10.53	0.00	10.53	0.00	0.00	10.53	10.53	10.53	0.00	0.00	5.26	10.53	10.53	5.26
Total	84.21	47.37	100.00	47.37	57.89	31.58	94.74	94.74	63.16	15.79	78.95	100.00	94.74	31.58

All the management staff members who participated in the survey requested for competency training in Statistical Control Tools (SCT) and Financial Accounting for Non-Finance Managers (FA). More than 80% of the staff members desired training in Change Management (94.74%), Information Technology (94.74%) and Risk Management (84.21%). The least attractive programmes were Production and Operations (31.58%) and Entrepreneurship (31.58%). In a nutshell, competency training was identified as the major required tool for enhancing performance effectiveness of the management staff members. The demand for competency training resulted in the development of the implementation budget template that is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Implementation Budget Template

Activity	Unit price (\$)	No. of people	Total (\$)
1.0 Needs Assessment Survey			
1.1 Data gathering & focused group interviews:			
1.2 Data analysis & presentation:			
2.0 Re-Enforce the Strategic Plan			
2.1 Conscientise new & old management staff of the strategic			
2.2 plan of the organization – 1 day:			
2.3 Meals (two tea breaks & lunch):			

2.4	Stationery (booklets, pens, board markers, sheets & internet):			
3.0	Team Building			
3.1	Team building workshop for two days:			
3.2	Meals (two tea breaks & lunch):			
3.3	Stationery (booklets, pens, board markers, sheets & internet):			
4.0	Capacity Building			
4.1	Course: _____			
4.1.1	Two facilitators for 5 working days:			
4.1.2	Meals (two tea breaks & lunch):			
4.1.3	Stationery (booklets, pens, board markers, sheets & internet):			
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5.0	Research: Scope of the Market			
5.1	Data collection by researchers:			
5.2	Transport of the researchers:			
5.3	Accommodation of the researchers:			
5.4	Meals of the researchers:			
5.5	Allowances of Assistant Researchers:			
5.6	Stationery:			
6.0	Report Writing			
6.1	Data compilation:			
6.2	Data analysis:			
6.3	Data presentation:			
6.4	Policy brief:			
Total Cost				

Discussion of Results

The research established ten management activities that were being performed by the management staff members. The indigenous companies fail due to creating many functions that increase production costs (Murairwa, 2016a). The AFZ corporate business was formed from merged two small independent family businesses. Thus, according to Andrews (2010), the AFZ Corporate business was in its infant stage or start-up expansion stage. The company should consider at most four functions, namely, operations; finance, marketing and auditing as suggested by Murairwa (2016a). This will minimise the production costs of the infant corporate business. The corporate business is operating below the best operating level of at least 70% capacity but in contradiction, implemented many production functions. The research established a mismatch between the academic qualifications and job activities that were being performed by some of the management staff members. This contradicts Kasika (2015) who stated that the extent to which a company achieves its business objectives depends on the deployment of staff competencies and academic qualifications. The research found that one of the factors that reduces production is the placement of staff's academic qualifications on mismatching job activities. A relevant academic qualification is an essential tool for a staff member to effectively complete their business tasks (Ng & Feldman, 2009). This research found that most of the management staff members had academic qualifications that were irrelevant to the business functions they were performing.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The company should plan a strategic retreat every year to conscientise and refresh new and old management staff members for the first few consecutive years. The strategic retreat will constantly remind the management staff members of what is required of them in line with the management's vision of the company. The company should constantly offer team building workshops. The AFZ corporate business is a merger of two family owned businesses. Therefore, there is need for the company to integrate the management staff members together in order for them to work as one team. The company should offer team building and coaching seminars for newly recruited, transferred or promoted management staff members.

The corporate company should employ qualified staff members for key company management positions. The company should hire qualified staff in accounting and logistics and distribution departments. This is a sensitive matter and should be handled with care as sabotage and resistance to change may lead to frustration and resignation of both current and new management staff members. There is need for a deliberate policy to continuously train and offer refresher courses and team building activities to the management staff members in order to remain locally, regionally and internationally competitive.

The company should offer training to management staff members in order to enhance their skills and competencies in the current job positions. Most of the management staff members had academic qualifications but they were performing activities that were irrelevant to their academic qualifications. The company should train them in their current positions or redeploy and train them in new positions or hire new management staff members where there is need. Therefore, competencies and skills training are required for the management staff members in all the departments in order to achieve the desired development phase of the company. The company should also come up with strategies of developing and integrating both new and old management staff members into a competitive production team.

There is need for capacity building of management staff members in Change Management; Corporate Communication; Entrepreneurship; Financial Accounting for Non-Finance Managers; Food Technology & Processing; Human Resources Management; Information Technology; Intellectual Property; Procurement & Distribution; Production & Operations; Project Management; Quality Control; Risk Management; and Statistical Control Tools. To achieve performance effectiveness, the company should implement nine strategies: (a) assertive communication and interaction, (b) clear and focused business goals, (c) deploy staff members according to qualification and business activities being performed, (d) eliminate fear in management staff members, (e) embrace production, distribution and communication technologies, (f) incentivize management staff members, (g) maintain the right production team, (h) train and develop management staff members and (i) administer all the strategies.

Areas for further research

There is need to conduct studies in scope of the market, supply and distribution chain, production technology, quality management and investment opportunities. A confirmatory research could be carried out on the market requirements in order to capture the customer expectations on the quality of the products that are produced by AFZ corporate business. The research can establish

the demand market for the products that will be produced by the company that will be implementing the findings of this research.

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