

A Journal Article Critique Of “Three Chronological Steps Toward Encouraging Intrapreneurship: Lessons From Wehkamp Case By J. Deprez Et Al (2017).”

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Abstract: This paper provides a critique to an article by J. Deprez et al (2017) entitled “Three Chronological steps toward encouraging Intrapreneurship: Lessons from Wehkamp case, published in the journal Business horizons (61), 135-145 and available online at: www.sciencedirect.com in which they present the study on the Wehkamp nl. -a Netherlands top -3-market leader e-tailer firm founded in 1952 that almost collapsed but experienced a double-digit growth and revenues with over \$800 million dollars in 2015. J. Deprez et al (2017) use the Wehkamp case to propose the steps that business firms can follow to encourage intrapreneurship and make a turn-around from slow growing and underperforming businesses to adaptive, rapid growing, dynamic and innovative firms by taking advantage of the creative efforts of their employees and resources within a business organisation-an entrepreneurship concept referred to as Corporate entrepreneurship (CE). In this paper the author present a critique to the journal article.

Keywords: Journal article critique, chronological steps, intrapreneurship, Wehkamp case.

1.0 Introduction

A critical reading and analysis was made on the Journal Article published by Deprez et al (2017) in the Journal business horizons entitled: **Three Chronological steps towards encouraging Intrapreneurship: Lessons from the Wehkamp case available online at: www.sciencedirect.com** and the authors offer their critical assessment as follows;

2.0 Comments on the Journal article

2.1 Article title

J. Deprez et al (2017, p.135) gives the title as “**Three chronological steps towards encouraging Intrapreneurship: Lessons from the the Wehkamp case.**” The title as shown is not clear and may be misleading in that the title implies that article was only about the systematic process of encouraging/promoting corporate entrepreneurship in a business organisation but critical analysis shows that it also covers the different strategies and tactics of encouraging or promoting Intrapreneurship, therefore the title should remain open say for example; “Strategies towards encouraging Intrapreneurship: Lessons from Wehkamp case.”

2.2 Article abstract

J. Deprez et al (2017, p.135), in the abstract introduction gives a clear picture of today’s business environment as being that which requires innovations and organisational renewal. It also explains the purpose of the article as being to examine how Wehkamp nl. overcame challenges of encouraging Intrapreneurship among employees and then gives the summary of the key study areas. To a fair extent the abstract of the study was representative of the journal article, and in the correct form, he/she who reads it can understand the overall purpose of the study because it was

made clear from sentence five up to the end of the abstract. However, the abstract fails to give an overview of a number of things; first of all, every study should be guided by research questions that keep it focused, secondly, an abstract should have a mention of the study design, methods and tools for data collection and analysis, it also fails to give a clear highlight of the respondents that provided information, and the key findings, much as these are reflected in the body of the text of the article. This clearly contradicts with T. Kotze (2007) who observed that a good abstract should have seven elements i.e. a brief theme, main purpose or aim of the study, academic/practical importance, methodology, findings, conclusions, and finally, practical and managerial implications of the study; which are clearly missing in the abstract of the journal article by J. Deprez et al (2017) as earlier on observed.

2.3 Article text.

The authors give a good background story of Wehkamp from a traditional catalogue firm to an e-tail modern franchise, however, the authors in their story failed to give the location of the Wehkamp.nl company in Netherlands, and the number of employees it started with, much as the year of establishment is given as 1952. The text gives a highlight of the methodologies used for carrying out the study, which include the analysis of historic and current company materials, observations, field notes and 62 in-depth interviews which were conducted in 2013, however, the authors fail to give instruments/tools that were employed to carry out this study in fact it is very difficult to make out how the data was collected. The authors also give the respondents as being the employees of Wehkamp. nl but they fail to show the sample size of the respondents so it’s difficult to know how large the study was, furthermore, the authors make no mention of the methods that were used for data analysis. In building the theoretical basis for promoting Corporate Entrepreneurship (CE) in Organisations, the

authors define entrepreneurship as a bottom-up initiative (J. Deprez et al, 2017, p. 136), in which efforts begin from a few innovative employees who are ready to take the risk, and are often characterized as challenge seeking, stubborn, proactive and creative individuals who actually enjoy going against the flow and prefer a turbulent work environment which is a correct perception and is a good observation as well given the many experts sources that support this assumption as the basis of corporate entrepreneurs for example; Filion, L.J (1999: 2) gives a case of an employee with a visionary character, and with the ability to question the status quo whose proposals made him as Intrapreneur. Furthermore, consideration of employee characteristics is important when encouraging intrapreneurship in organisations as noted by Anderson.N. (2014) that employee characteristics at individual level and team level are very vital when promoting creativity in an organisation. According to the authors, the steps for encouraging Intrapreneurship in the Wehkamp.nl case were; intrapreneurship of the few; using turbulent times to instigate intrapreneurship in the many, and maintaining the intrapreneurship of the many which give a comprehensive overview of the experience of the steps and the strategies that Wehkamp nl. followed to promote intrapreneurship using the employees to change the story of the Wehkamp from a traditional and rigid catalogue company to a booming e-tail company. This first part deals with the key aspect of corporate entrepreneurship development in which intrapreneurial efforts can be begin small and build up into a critical mass until an organisation-wide entrepreneurship scale is achieved. Secondly, the disruptive environment can lead to an employee-led-demand and consequent innovative behavior which builds an improved organisation with a competitive advantage, this observation in Wehkamp is not different from the findings of a study conducted in Pakistan by Bushra, A.K et al (2011:8), in which a majority of the respondents (all service-sector employees; 86% in banking sector and 100% in the telecom sector) claimed to have been individually involved in introducing a “few” to “many” innovative products or services to the organisations that they were employed in response to external environment volatility, furthermore, maintaining the intrapreneurship of the many is a key step in entrenching corporate entrepreneurship in an organisation. The authors emphasize the critical role of the management in promoting Corporate entrepreneurship at each step, Some of organisational management strategies they proposed for encouraging Intrapreneurship in organisations at each step are as follows; 1. on the intrapreneurship of the few, the strategies are: to identify strategically positioned teams, having team leaders to lead innovation efforts, use of past experiences; 2. using turbulent times to instigate intrapreneurship, the strategies are: promoting desired behavior, creating awareness, encouraging communication and fairness; 3. maintaining the intrapreneurship of the many as anchoring intrapreneurship, providing time, support and resources, celebrating successful ideas together and continuous reinforcement of the employees. By presenting these viewpoints, the authors were able to raise pertinent points for all managers to enable them become practitioners of the concept of Intrapreneurship (Corporate entrepreneurship), therefore transforming their organisations from traditional organisations to modern innovative firms, furthermore, these viewpoints are supported by a number of studies such as that of Park. S.H et al (2014) who proposed a

model and strategies for increasing employee voluntary intrapreneurship to compose of the following; managerial responsiveness to innovative effort; employee empowerment and communication symmetry and Guiyao. T. et al (2018) who established that organisational support had a positive effect in fostering employee creativity. From the foregoing, it is clear that the authors were able to give elaborate description and prescription in the form of the actions to be followed by the CE practitioners.

2.4 Article conclusion

In J. Deprez et al (2017, p.144), the article conclusion gives a way forward for companies trying to recruit individuals to promote internal innovation as allowing initiative of a few individuals, using leaders as role models, allowing autonomy for idea development, and setting new boundaries to decrease the frustration in an organisation, however, these may not be the only strategies for promoting Intrapreneurship in an organisation, others strategies include; management support, availability of resources, flexible work schedules, training and employee motivation. This conclusion is not only a proposal but it sets terms upon which future Intrapreneurship efforts in any organisation could be encouraged, promoted and sustained so that organisations are not only able to gain a competitive advantage over others but are also able to continuously transform themselves better and to become modern global firms.

2.5 Article References

The authors in this article raised a relatively new issue. The authors were able to include an elaborate list of forty-two references. A proportionate number of the reference sources (twenty-six) are recent (relatively new) above the year 2000, while a relatively greater number (Sixteen) of them is old, this is not a surprise since Intrapreneurship has recently picked up interest among the academia and entrepreneurship world. The first reference in the list is; Adam, J.S. (1965). Inequality in Social exchange. in L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol.2, pp.267-299). New York. NY: Academic Press.) is relatively old while the newest reference is: Hadad, J. (2017). Mail order in the US. Los Angeles, CA: IBIS world.

3.0 Critique Summary and Conclusion

As an overall observation, writer concludes that the journal article raised a very pertinent issue – encouraging intrapreneurship, it offers a clear evidence of how an organisation which is on the verge of disintegrating can be transformed from within through the efforts of the employees who are willing to see a positive turn within the organisation.

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Author Profile



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