Goal Attainment Approach Pitfalls: Needs for an Adaptable Approach for the Complexities of Current Goal Attainment

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Introduction

An organization's chosen approach to attaining their goals effectively may not always contain ideal efficiency, but each organization sets their own goals to gauge their effectiveness. Being able to look at an organization through a lens that can most accurately measure quantitative and qualitative production is a game changer. The 'Goal Attainment Approach' seems to be looking at organizations' goals through too abstract/broad of a lens. If you're setting primarily long-term goals that can account for deviation while in the process reaching said goals, then the current Goal Attainment Approach may work for you. However, organizations remain complex systems of subunits and subsystems. Not accounting for less lofty goals that must be set throughout the vertical and horizontal hierarchy of leadership in an organization could be detrimental to the official and operative goals, that the goal attainment approach defaults to for organizational effectiveness.

Organizations have become increasingly complex and shifting away from the traditional hierarchy models of the past, so organizational tasks must be adaptable and sustainable. Employees within these organizations are not cogs in a wheel of machinery that works smoothly a high percentage of the time, but a complex network of individuals that can buy into organizational identity. This is just one of the ways the Goal Attainment Approach falls short, due to the power control or political nature of organizations and how they must function with special self-interests effectively.

Using the Goal Attainment Approach can help an organization appear effective if the goals are set with vague constraints and follow a similar formula for tasks as the period of goals before them. Other approaches, the Systems Resource Approach and Internal Process Approach have clear

strengths too, but also exhibit weaknesses that can be difficult to overcome. It all depends on your organization's intended direction. Many of these approaches are meant for specific types of organizations. Splitting all organizations into a handful of approaches wouldn't allow them to pivot and adapt to the quickly changing industries they are involved. "Sport organizations are goal seeking entities, structured to achieve a particular purpose(s). The goals of a sport organization are extremely important for communicating its purpose and identity, to both employees and to external constituents" (Slack & Parent, 2006).

The Goal Attainment Approach was heavily used by professional sports organizations, but falters when you try to apply it to collegiate programs for its failure to account for variation in the short-term and sometimes the long-term goals set. This approach centers around official and operative goals, which may create vague tasks for those across an organization to try to get behind. Results can be as easy to measure as – did you meet your goal or did you not? These can be variable based on those in power positions or upper management saying we met the overall goal, even though you may have fallen short in some areas (Slack, 2006). Ideally, polishing this approach and gearing it towards organizational accountability to their goals, which means adding depth to it through inputs leading to outputs and not primarily focusing on outputs. We are a results driven society, so I see the appeal in always looking for certain outputs; however, goal attainment in this fashion may not be sustainable. Organizational structure needs to be considered a bit more in this modified Goal Attainment Approach.

Creating Sustainable Organizational Success

Calculating effectiveness can be as simple as achieving your set goals as an organization. Sustainability of continuous achievement of loftier goals year after year will depend on the value set on specific tasks. The Dallas Cowboys and Los Angeles Rams are perfect examples of National Football League (NFL) franchises attaining goals with little to no remorse for the efficiency or resources it takes to achieve said goal(s). The Dallas Cowboys valuation as a sports franchise is the most profitable sports entity in the world. They are an anomaly in that they have not tasted the pinnacle of league success by winning a Super Bowl for the last 20 plus years. They can be considered effective as an organization if they set operative goals primarily including marketability and revenue generation, but ineffective if they intended to really win the Superbowl.

The Los Angeles Rams have poured money and draft pick capital into a win now mentality across their organization. Their organization appeared to buy in, and they have since attained their long-term goal of winning the Superbowl. Both organizations have thrown efficiency out the window. Are these organizations setting a standard or have they depicted themselves as outliers in their league? The Cowboys approach is certainly more sustainable, but if they intend to win a Superbowl they may need to retool some things. In sports, there is no clear or set path to most any goal set but establishing best practice and balance within organizations could lead to desirable results. This is where sustainability and using the goal attainment approach as a base with room for improvement could be interesting. Starting with the development of clear policies and procedures to carryout throughout an organization can lead to a better understanding of the role each member should be playing in the attainment of effective organizational structure.

Internal Constituents (Importance of Subunits/Subsystems)

Understanding the needs and most effective uses for the subunits within an organization can make all the difference in the trajectory your organization is headed. Human capital cannot be just glanced over when setting goals that include the involvement of every level of an organization. Using the Internal Process Approach's vision for inputs converted into outputs and meshing it with the Goal Attainment Approach could lead to more measurable quantitative and qualitative results. This may allow for more control towards a successful goal attainment process, if those in charge obtain a better understanding of the multiple tiers to consider when setting their large organizational goals. Effectiveness can be viewed from different angles throughout an organization, for instance, owners, coaches, athletes, and spectators. Reducing organizational uncertainty by setting goals with all constituents of an organization in consensus is key (Slack, 2006).

Introducing types of autonomy if the position a constituent holds can function effectively by virtue of their skills and individual drive. Autonomy in whole subsets could be a positive if implemented effectively, which could allow for new ideas to blossom and organizational efficiency to rise across the board. Many individuals can be taught and prefer intrinsic values over extrinsic values within organizational structure (Pink, 2009). In a survey conducted in 2018, leaders and subordinates from many sports' organizational backgrounds for a total of 215 completed surveys produced eye-opening findings. Using structural equation modeling, there were strong ties between shared leadership, organizational performance, and innovative work behavior (Kang, Svensson & Ha, 2019).

Nurturing the human capital in your organization with specific structural moves to allow for organic growth can advance an organization to heights they may not have even considered. This may allow for less arm twisting to achieve an organization's goals. Finding value in your tangible and intangible assets, which exhibits some strengths of the Systems Resource Approach.

Creating a cohesive organization will require effective human resources, open systems, internal processes, and rational goals. The Competing Values Approach/Model if transplanted with purpose into an organization's structure can do wonders for communication and goal development/attainment (Slack, 2006). Seeking organizational culture insights can be complex but understanding the culture your organization is cultivating is extremely integral in being able to adapt, improve resiliency, and remain equipped to take on the next challenge in stride.

Manufacturing organizational citizenship behavior, can be detrimental to an organization's tasks. By making organizational citizenship behavior compulsory across an organization, it may damage the intent (Alastair, Coldwell, & Callaghan, 2013). Allowing internal constituents to buy into the structure an organization is cultivating can create remarkable results that many organizations end up reaping the benefits of down the line. Removal of set standards and centralization of hierarchy is happening rapidly across many industries that are looking to adapt to present day constituent management (Fahlén, 2005).

Balance in Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness

The layers in an organization and its effectiveness can be compared to a Russian Doll, for example, subsets have other subsets within them. Management must use a set of tools and metrics to gauge

organizational efficiency and effectiveness most accurately. Key indicators are different based on industry, the type of sport, and even the league they function within (Andreadis, 2009).

Kaplan and Norton (1993) developed a method for determining organizational effectiveness (means-ends relationship), which they called the 'balanced scorecard.' The balanced scorecard factors in four perspectives; the financial, the customer, the internal process, and innovation and learning. Some scholars have also suggested adding a social responsibility perspective to the balanced scorecard model (Andreadis, 2009).

Social structure may necessitate everyone involved in a task to believe in the wagon they've hooked their horse. Hierarchy presents challenges; individuals within lower tiers of the organizational structure may have issues soliciting their opinions to their superiors. There need to be channels in place to catch possible gripes within a task that can keep constituents from fully buying in to certain organizational goals (Andreadis, 2009). They may have come up with a more efficient and effective way to do something, but you'd never know due to poor flow of communication. Channels of communication no matter the size of the organization must remain clear and accessible to remain effective.

Investing time and other resources towards building effective connections in subunits could make all the difference. Knowing which subunits could benefit from knowing what another subunit's tasks are, can be tricky, but you may be able to connect them through task related inputs and outputs. Larger organizations can pair unlikely departments with positive effect. For example, attaching the marketing department to the accounting department could actually speed up

marketing processes and allow for greater clarity on budget allocation that the marketing department may receive in the present/future. Connecting departments that might have to compete for the same segment of budget allocation could get messier than you initially think. Competitiveness can be positive and healthy for the internal processes of an organization, but it can also tear one apart. Finding the correct balance between departments and these subunits/systems is essential.

Sports organizations remain very vertical hierarchies with ownership's goals leading the way. Within many of these present-day vertical hierarchies, the line is blurring, and leaders are taking on more subunits, which can make certain parts of the vertical tree of leadership look horizontal in structure at certain levels. These horizontal levels can help a vertical structure thrive by allowing subunits to give suggestions/input to improve the efficiency of their subsystem (Quain, 2019). Clear policies and procedures may even allow subunits to guide their input to further guarantee attainment of ownership/leadership's goals. The increased complexity of the sports organization can lead to more measurable qualitative and quantitative data, and increased success if an organization remains vigilante on their adaptability to the current industry advances.

External Constituents

Considering outside influences of an organization and their goals is no small task. External factors to include in the decision-making process are technology, customers, resources, competition, and political/social conditions, etc. Not including even one of these factors in the process of setting certain goals could be detrimental to the health of your organization and its planned trajectory. Modern external constituent factors have grown in complexity at the same or similar rate as internal constituent factors have in the last decade. For example, social media,

analytics, and newly tracked metrics need to be accounted for where there previously was nothing like it and everyone wielding such power of instant blasts of information to all constituents of an organization within seconds (positive/negative/basic information/etc). Making sure you've invested resources on individuals internally to handle possible firestorms externally has become an emphasis in just the last decade.

Rodriguez (2019) conducted research that "reflects other variables to be considered in order to optimize the management process in sports management and will result in sustainable development, fulfilling their activities and achieving the stated goal." These variables include task structure, person, environment, technology, with the addition of competitiveness. Sports leagues and the teams within them are primarily revenue and business first driven entities. Balancing the internal and external is difficult at times, but some teams are outliers like the Cowboys that do not have to deal with the minutia of remaining competitive in as many facets as possible. Externally you want to drive revenue with fan support, which may lead to larger sponsorship opportunities, which can lead to more and more revenue. Many organizations losing fan support due to their inability to remain competitive on the field or court can leave them on life-support. Larger market organizations can tread water for a while before fan support faulters, for example, the New York Knicks and their recent return to contending for a championship after a several decade drought. Their fans were frustrated with their results on the field but remained loyal through the pain of irrelevancy. Smaller market teams have to face different challenges and the need for an adaptable goal attainment plan between organizational structures is prevalent across sports leagues.

Rodriguez (2019) emphasizes that maintaining a macro approach when looking at four variables; political, economic, social, and technological, is key for maintaining an

organization's integration and adequacy in implementing them. These variables are constantly changing, which means they need to be monitored continuously. Putting individuals within an organization in the right positions to succeed will allow leaders to assertion strengths and weaknesses of the actors within them. Organizations must account for training employees to be able to make the efficient and effective moves, to minimize losses and maximize revenue generation. Leaders must have the ability to maintain focus on tasks, while projecting consideration.

New Standard for a Sustainable Goal Attainment Approach

The Goal Attainment Approach is a guiding relic of past sports organizational success. Increasing complexity has necessitated its revitalization. Better business practices in the management of subunits within an organization have led to production and exponential goal setting year after year. Organizations thinking within a broad scope of official goal(s) is a thing of the past. Organizational leaders must be able to account for the deviations that may occur throughout their attainment process. Effective communication between multiple levels and channels of an organization is a difference maker currently. Tasks do not always have to be black and white to adhere to set policies and procedures but remain attune to the internal and external factors that may influence their need for adjustment. To remain effective and competitive in the sports industry, organizational structure must be adaptable to the times.

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