Creating Alignment during Organizational Change: A Case Study of the American Cancer Society's Cause-Branding Platform Design

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Abstract: Cause-branding related marketing alliances have exploded in the past decade. Cause-related partnerships represent a >$1billion industry benefiting a broad range of stakeholders (non-profits, corporations, etc.) ACS leadership approved the creation a new vision for ACS corporate cause-branding partnerships as a new organizational strategic direction. Due to the governance structure, interpretation of the executive limitations, prior past experience, low cause-brand equity, and proposed prevention-based focus, the Society embarked on a strategic change management process to address strategy and implementation of this new initiative.

The purpose of this dissertation is to utilize a case study format to explore the ability and ramifications of creating alignment during the change management process surrounding key decisions, governance and policy changes and implementation tactics with executive leadership, senior leadership, and implementation staff. The case study includes a situation analysis of the American Cancer Society, provides background on why the organization wants to move in this new marketing direction; current background on cause-branding as an industry and ACS market share; the governance structure and organizational change management practices of ACS. A literature review on creating alignment during change management is utilized to establish necessary components of alignment theory. Using information gathered from interviews and a document review were utilized to further understand the ability of the organization to meet two crucial points of alignment, vision and work processes.

The case study was able to identify key decision points for the change management strategy, distinct areas of agreement on vision and work processes for policy changes, as well as areas that did not share a common understanding on vision or work processes. In addition, interviews were able to identify core strengths of the change strategy that are applicable to building capacity for future change in the organization. Four recommendations for improving the current cause branding change strategy are made to solidify alignment across all decision points. Based on this case study, five recommendations with a roadmap are made to encourage alignment across future change initiatives in the organization.

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