

Strategic Planning
By (Student's Name)

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Strategic Planning

The report prepared provides a comprehensive approach to undertaking the strategic planning of Cesture LLP; the leading certification body in the UK's contracting industry. The organisation is a partnership of the Electrical Contractors Association and the Electrical Safety Council. The Electrical Safety Council aims at mitigating the risks of domestic and workplace incidents throughout the UK while the Electrical Contractors Association stands out as an electrical contracting industry trade association.

Task 1

1.1 Strategic Aims and Objectives of the Organization

Certsure LLP is a renowned voluntary regulatory certification company operating in the electrical contracting industry. As such, the organisation aims at maintaining the lead as a certification body while identifying areas as well as opportunities that are complementary with certification and exploiting them. In addition to the certification services, the organisation aims at creating Building Regulation schemes that are aimed at supporting the construction industry and beyond. Another notable strategic aim at Certsure is the continued maintenance of as well as the promotion of standards across the industry noting that quality is the core of continued excellence.

Certsure's strategic objectives include increasing customer retention through improving its service approach for existing customers while expanding services to potential customers. Another objective of the organisation is to capitalise on its physical facilities to implement the promotional plans subsequently driving business increase. It is worth mentioning that the organisation seeks to develop leadership abilities for its staff, employing professionals who

create success for clients and continually learn, adopt, and disseminate best industrial practices to clients.

1.2 Effect of stakeholders on a strategic plan

The process of developing a strategic plan ought to incorporate logical as well as external analysis (Abdallah and Langley, 2014 p.236; Bryson, 2018 p.37). However, this is barely achieved since developing a strategic plan is continuously appearing to be a product of stakeholder power (Morsing and Schultz, 2006 P. 327). A strategic plan can be viewed as the drawing of future-oriented activities which create room for the interaction of an organisation with the external competitive advantage in such a way to achieve the objectives of the organisation (Ansoff et al., 2018 p.149; Glaister and Falshaw, 1999 p.110; Godet, 2000 p.8). Stakeholders have been described as the groups that provide support for an organisation where their withdrawal of support would lead to the cessation to exist for the organisation (Berman et al., 1999 p.494; Bouhali et al., 2015 p.75). Stakeholders range from customers, suppliers, employees, shareholders, and unions as well as financial institutions (Majluf and Hax, 1996 p.54).

As such, stakeholder expectations play an integral part in the formulation of strategic plans (Thompson et al., 2015 p.81). Customers' view of value and perceived benefits determines the strategies that an organisation lays down in efforts to produce unique competencies and achieve competitive advantage (Berry, 1994 p.322; Cascio, 2015 p.44). The strategic plans evolve with changing wants and needs of customers to maintain market share, power, and position (Raggio and Leone, 2007 p.385). On the other hand, society builds expectations encompassing corporate social responsibility and ethics in a cultural context which ought to be in tandem with the organisational strategic plans (Lim and Greenwood, 2017 p.770). It is worth

mentioning that should the expectations of stakeholders fail to be met, there is a likelihood for inappropriate employment of politics and power. Subsequently, the choice of organisation strategy plan and direction is a function of stakeholder expectations and values which can be exerted through political power.

Task 2

2.1 Using a theory determine the strategic options available

A strategic plan entails the direction that a company aims at taking while making appropriate decisions revolving around resource allocation to pursue the strategy (Anderson, 1982 p.19; Cândido and Santos, 2015 p.235). Certsure has numerous strategy options to ensure that it maintains its position as the leader in the contracting industry. A SWOT and PESTEL analysis are critical in defining the strategic options for Certsure.

The SWOT analysis provides a basis for the organisation to explore the internal and external environments (Panagiotou, 2003 p.9). Certsure's strengths include internal alignment with a demonstrated relationship between the pay structure and the competencies, skills, and jobs within the organisation. A transformational leadership approach exists within Certsure resulting in leading through inspiration. Due to the dynamic nature of the contracting industry, Certsure has appropriate measures of change management with strategic leadership. However, notable weaknesses for the company range from weak persuasion skills, making it challenging to bring on board new customers. The organisation does not have a distinct conflict resolution framework with ineffective teamwork coherence building and interpersonal skills. Opportunities include technology which the organisation can take advantage of and provide training for current customers through online learning programs. There are opportunities in providing mentorship programs, especially for the young engineers. Certsure is also faced with threats from the

external environment where there is a shown tendency for customers to take criticism personally coupled with poor learning attitudes.

A PESTEL analysis shows that Certsure is faced with favourable political factors, including political stability and government policies that are in support of the contracting industry. Increasing growth of the infrastructure sector is an advantageous economic factor for Certsure, providing opportunities to attract potential customers. Increasing population as a social factor is rendering it critical for increased construction of housing and other infrastructural amenities in efforts to accommodate the growing population. As such, the factor creates opportunities for Certsure to engage young engineers, train them, and provide certification to close the building services niche created by the growing population. Additionally, modern technological advances such as the "Building Information Modeling" and online learning provide an opportunity for Certsure to provide training on safety visualisation and other certification fronts. The organisation is faced with environmental factors such as the need to reduce environmental pollution and the demand for cleaner energy. Finally, as a certification body in the contracting industry, Certsure has to conform to legal requirements that include safety standards aimed at reducing accidents and serious injuries.

While employing the SWOT and PESTEL analysis in the Certsure context, four strategic options can be derived to achieve its strategic aims. One option is to provide mentorship to existing customers while riding on the company's transformational leadership approach and the legal requirement for adherence to safety standards. The strategic option is founded on transformational leadership's ability to build a clear organisational vision and motivate followers in such a way to believe in the organisational vision and work towards achieving it while putting in place measures to curb accidents and injuries (Grant and Jordan, 2015 p. 85). Certsure can

create positive and valuable change in its customers through mentorship and certification to keep within legal requirements.

Another strategic option available for Certsure is providing online learning programs. Industrial certification process entails evaluation of programs for individual organisations within an industry to ensure the organisations meet the standards that are set for the industry. Ensuring adherence to standards for different organisations requires that these organisations understand the standards against which the evaluation is to be based (Greenberg, 2014 p.66). Technological advances supports online learning, which is a significant tool of influencing potential customers by making them understand certification from Certsure's point of view and increase the organisation's market share. However, the strategy can be negatively impacted by the poor learning attitudes that customers have.

Expanding into areas that fit within Certsure mission and vision statements poses as another strategic option Certsure can consider. Certsure could expand into the development of products that promote quality of work within the contracting industry. Within the three brands that are run by Certsure, the organisation can develop forward and backward linkages such as manufacture of solar and heat pumps which meet industrial quality standards consequently satisfying the environmental factors of reducing environmental pollution. Consequently, certification for the organisation's customers will be made easier since the organisation will be sure that quality standards are adhered to for the contractors using Certsure products. More products which the Certsure can explore include the development of modern technologies and softwares for customer use in their contracting work. Developing technologies would attract more customers within the industry to not only seek Certsure certification but also purchase their products since they will be assured of adherence to industrial quality standards.

The final option that the organisation can undertake is to remain within the current scope of operations. Studies point out to the fact that “do nothing” is a viable strategic option (Hill et al., 2014 p. 81). According to the SWOT analysis, Certsure has numerous inherent weaknesses and external threats that would impact on the scope of the company’s strategic planning. The company suffers weak persuasion abilities which would make it challenging for it to increase its market share through mentoring as well as online learning programs.

2.2 Assessing feasibility of alternative options

Selecting the right strategy for an organisation can be a challenging undertaking (Madsen and Walker, 2015 p. 30). The decision on the criteria to use for assessing the right strategy is the most important part of the process. Subsequently, the assessment of the alternative strategic options will follow the SAF Strategy Model (Mueller and Naffziger, 2015 P. 80). The SAF model evaluates the suitability, acceptability, and feasibility of the available strategic options.

The suitability of providing mentorship programs for customers is significant noting that Certsure can ride on its transformational leadership, internal alignment, and strategic leadership strengths as well as its need to conform to legal requirements of promoting safety and reducing accidents within the industry. The strategic alternative is acceptable when viewed in the lens of shareholder value analysis. Further, the adoption of the strategy would yield both financial and non-financial returns with increasing market power and share. It can be argued that the alternative is feasible noting that Certsure already has over eighty training centres across the UK within the NICEIC Certification brand. Therefore the manpower to implement the strategy exists in addition to an organisation structure and a market that would be receptive to the strategy.

Online learning programs as an alternative strategy can be viewed as a suitable option given the fact that it is aligned to Certsure’s strategy of maintaining the lead in voluntary

certification within the contracting industry coupled with the advances in technological advances. Further, there is environmental suitability both internally and externally considering that time would be a limited resource for contractors to engage in physical learning programs. The strategy overcomes the time management weakness identified further boosting its suitability. The acceptability of the strategy is amplified by the minimal financial lay-out which would outweigh the potential benefits that would accrue to the organisation with the success of the strategy. Stakeholders would deem the alternative as acceptable since it increases value for customers as well as the shareholders. The alternative is feasible, noting that there is an existing market that would identify with the strategy while the internal alignment acts as a boost for availability of manpower to successfully implement the strategy.

Expanding into areas that are fitting within Certsure's scope of operation, vision, and mission is a suitable strategy since it would reflect the drive of the organisation to maintain the lead in voluntary certification. Furthermore, the strategy would utilise the strengths identified in the SWOT and the positive factors within the PESTEL analysis working to attract more customers and increase Certsure's market share. While considering feasibility, the strategy would be feasible since there is ready market that is created by increasing population and growth of the infrastructure industry by an estimated 4%. However, feasibility would be affected by the need to install new machinery, pump more financial resources, and recruitment of manpower for the production of its technologies and products.

Taking no strategy would stand out as failing to make use of the company strengths and would not work to overcome any of the difficulties that the company is experiencing from the internal and external environments (Pearce et al., 2000 p.66). Further, there would be no shareholder value created making the strategy fail the acceptability as well as the feasibility tests.

2.3 Risk assessment of preferred alternatives

Risks are identified and reviewed systematically to ensure that processes, activities, and situations that have the potential to cause harm are controlled effectively. Providing mentoring and online learning programs is faced with risks that include the failure to achieve increase in market share. Since the customers have shown tendencies to take correction personally coupled with poor attitudes to learning, there is a risk of losing customers as well as stress that accompanies poor attendance and response to mentorship and online learning programs. Further, online learning and mentorship programs may fail to deliver the anticipated change for Certsure which poses the risk of damaged reputation and failure to achieve revenue forecasts. The risks can be mitigated by recruiting potential customers who are engaged in the online learning and mentorship programs in addition to requiring existing members to take part in the programs to overcome poor attendance and response to the programs.

2.4 Identifying the selected strategic directions

Providing mentorship and online learning programs stand out as the most suitable strategic decisions for Certsure. As discussed earlier, Certsure seeks to support industrial players within the contracting industry while promoting adherence to safety standards. Further, customer retention through services improvement is critical for the organisation. As such, conducting online training and mentorship programs prove to be critical in disseminating the required information. The internal and external factors are favorable to the selected strategic directions noting that the organisation has adopted a transformation leadership style and internal alignment that the organisation can capitalise on in pursuing the strategic directions. The existence of young engineers who are potential clients requires mentoring to recruit them into the existing

customer base. The SAF Strategy Model shows that these strategies fulfill the conditions of suitability, feasibility, and acceptability.

2.5 Produce a strategic plan to achieve the selected strategic directions

The goal of the strategic plan is to maintain the lead in the voluntary certification within the contracting industry. The objective of the plan is to grow and increase the market share for Certsure with offering of mentoring and online training programs as the strategies to be used to achieve the set objectives. Plans to achieve the strategic goals selected will entail identifying the primary goals of the programs while focusing on specific skills to be passed on to program participants. Further, the organisation will choose the right mentorship team first by identifying the mentors followed by mentees. To ensure that the programs run smoothly, an overall supervisor will be appointed responsible for curriculum development and offering support for the mentees as need arises. It will be integral to find the best online collaboration tool while collecting feedback and tracking progress. A target of one thousand new customers is set to be achieved through the laid strategies within the first two months of the plan implementation.

Task 3

3.1 Assess the factors to be considered in the implementation of the strategic plan

Numerous factors are critical in the implementation of the laid down strategic plan. Human resource at the organisation is among the most critical consideration during the implementation of the plan. There is need to engage the staff since they assist in generating additional input for the plan and builds commitment since they feel part of the process. The organisation will provide insights for opportunities, challenges, issues, and concerns which have not been clearly understood thus ensuring buy-in from the human resource to execute the plan. Additionally, human resource skills and abilities need to be aligned with the plan to be executed.

Financial resources are also a significant factor to consider noting that the success of the plan execution is not only dependent on the human resource but also availability of tools, equipments, and facilities to enable implementation. As such there is need to ensure that resource allocation within the organisation is made prioritising the aspects of the plan. As noted earlier, stakeholder expectations are paramount in influencing strategy development and subsequent strategy implementation (Galbreath, 2010 p.518). Thus shareholders and customers ought to be considered and communicated to appropriately to inform them of the perceived value that the plan has. Stakeholder buy-in is enhanced by the building of trust and sharing of information regularly and transparently.

Finally, the company culture and organisational structure are notable factors for consideration. The culture of the organisation rotates around the perception that employees have developed in the past towards implementation of strategic plans. Such perceptions include the reaction towards change. Consequently, the proposed strategic plan implementation ought to be aligned with the corporate business strategy, the organisational structure, and administrative systems (Dibrell et al., 2014 p.2004; Rudd et al., 2008 p.105).

3.2 Implement the strategic plan

Strategy implementation entails a description of the processes and activities that are put in place to ensure that execution of a strategic plan takes place (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1998 p.40; Gamble et al., 2014 p.55). Strategy implementation is often more significant to organisations in comparison to strategy development. Consequently, the implementation stage should be keenly undertaken to ensure overall organisational success. The implementation of the strategic plan will follow the Cascade model where the projects are provision of mentoring and online training programs.

Appointing a team leader is the first step in the implementation of the strategic plan with the team leader identifying resources that are needed including facilities and training materials. Further, the team leader will communicate the plan to the stakeholders who are responsible for making sure the specific tasks are accomplished.

As indicated earlier, the selected strategic directions are the provision of online training and mentorship programs. The plan intends to recruit one thousand new members through mentoring and online training programs within the first four months of the strategic plan implementation. Existing training centres across the UK will be used as the facilities where mentoring workshops will take place.

Additionally, the organisational website will form the platform where online training programs will be implemented. Certsure will conduct a two-week internal workshop where participating employees will be trained on the project's requirements, opportunities, challenges, and concerns to ensure smooth roll out. Further, the participants will get acquainted with the standards, procedures, and processes which will form the pillars of mentoring and online training. Internal workshops will also be integral in building consensus as well as commitment from the participants.

3.3 Determine the processes required to monitor and review the strategic plan

Monitoring, evaluation, and review of a strategic plan is a process that allows an organisation to measure performance against the set targets (Crittenden and Crittenden, 2000p.160). Key performance indicators have been established which will act as the benchmark for monitoring and reviewing of the strategic plan (Zhang et al., 2015 p.116). One performance indicator is the customer turnover rate which will be evaluated monthly. Additionally, the number of new customers will also be measured monthly. The two performance indicators will

work to monitor the success rate of the overall objective of maintain the lead in voluntary certification and growth through attracting new customers. Conversion rate for online-program learners and mentees from the mentoring program is an integral key performance indicator for the strategic plan (David and David, 2013 p.55). Finally, average rank on the organisation's website reviews forms an indicator that will show whether the organisation is maintaining the lead, growing or falling from being the leader in voluntary certification within the contracting industry.

It is worth mentioning that even though the fourth month will hold an evaluation, reviews will be made every month to discuss progress. The monthly review, “Strategy Checkpoint”, will be conducted at Certsure headquarters for one and half hours. The review meetings will be attended by the organisational top level management and the ten participating employees who will be the team leaders. An alternating chair person will be adopted to ensure that the implementation of the plan is not viewed as the CEO’s domain. During the meeting the team leaders will report on the progress while voicing the challenges and concerns that the strategic plan is facing in its implementation. In addition to the challenges, the meeting participants will provide appropriate recommendations to overcome the challenges being faced as well as making recommendations for improvement (Posavac, 2015 p.65). The team leaders will be conducting review meetings twice every month with all employee participants attending where their deliberations will form the basis for team leaders’ presentation during the “Strategy Checkpoint” meetings. The meetings are important in ensuring consistency within the project and providing a simple “at-a-glance” view of project progress (Zall Kusek and Rist, 2004 p. 139). Further, the meetings are integral in ensuring accountability and recognition for the participating employees and other stakeholders who are getting things accomplished.

3.4 Evaluate the impact of the strategic plan

A strategic plan has significant impacts on the overall survival and growth of organisations (Afuah and Afuah, 2003 p.56; Andersen, 2000 p.191; Cervone, 2014 p.158). First, the Certsure strategic plan will work to increase the existing customer base by recruiting new clients through the training programs. Further, the strategic plan will make certification process considerably easier since clients will understand the standards that Certsure puts in place which will in turn translate to improved quality of services delivered within the industry. Through the mentorship programs, young engineers in the industry will be motivated to provide quality services thus fostering creativity, innovation, and growth while enhancing Certsure's vision of continuing to be the leading certification body within the contracting industry.

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