

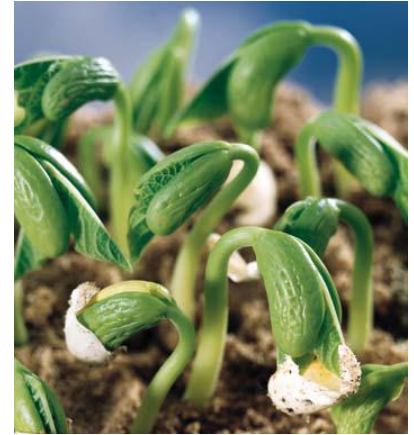


THE TIMES 100

BUSINESS CASE STUDIES

Vision, values and culture - Syngenta

World food production will need to approximately double over the coming 25 years. Syngenta is a company focused on researching and developing crops. In particular, it adds value through the application of plant science to seeds and crop protection.



Mission and vision - A business organisation needs a mission or purpose to create a sense of direction and effectively allocate resources and make decisions. This is conveyed by its aims which express how it adds value. Aims help direct resources to the needs of profitable markets. They point the way towards the business' objectives and strategy. Syngenta's purpose is '*Bringing plant potential to life*'. This is designed to energise and inspire the Syngenta community which includes all the company's stakeholders – its employees, customers, shareholders, creditors and suppliers. This shared sense of purpose provides the basis for the organisation's key objectives. These are the 'destinations', the major goals that the business intends to fulfil. Syngenta condenses its objectives into a vision. This is a short statement that paints a picture of where the company wants to be in the future. It is designed to co-ordinate and motivate employees to work towards a common goal. Syngenta's vision was to improve the production and planting of sugar cane in order to reduce costs and increase productivity in an ecologically sustainable way.

Values - An organisation's values demonstrate what the organisation stands for and help to create a set of shared behaviours which distinguish the company from others. Syngenta's values deeply influence everything that the company does. Significantly, its purpose and values not only express its ability to add commercial value but also reflect its beliefs as a human-focused organisation. Syngenta's values include four key aspects: innovation, intensity, health and performance. A company's values give everything it does relative importance. For example, one company may be driven by costs. Another company may focus on building its reputation. These are different values and over time they create different business cultures.

Culture - Culture can be summed up by the phrase 'the way things are done here.' Culture shows itself in different patterns of behaviour and different ways of responding to the various stakeholder groups. Cultures take time to make but once established they are surprisingly powerful and resilient. This has special importance at Syngenta as the business was formed in 2000 from earlier companies that had different identities and therefore cultures. Syngenta has been working hard to reinforce its chosen core values and make them central to its culture. The theorist Charles Handy identified four main types of culture.

Handy's culture types (1978):

Power culture - where power is concentrated in a leader or top management team. Quite informal and flexible, it allows trusted staff to get on with the job.

Role culture - where authority is arranged in a hierarchy and power depends on formal status. Many rules and procedures can make change difficult. Most often seen in large bureaucratic organisations.

Task culture - is purpose- and project-driven with leadership based on expertise for the task in hand. Often copes well with rapid change but may lack overall cohesion.

Person culture - stresses the individual's right to make decisions with shared rules only for mutual benefit. Effective for professionals and independent workers such as lawyers but may break up as conditions change.

To demonstrate Syngenta's belief in its people, it has a scheme called the Syngenta Awards. These recognise and celebrate the company's values in action. All staff are actively encouraged to put forward relevant stories concerning how they achieved success in a project. Not only are those involved in these stories rewarded at a ceremony but they are also shared across the company as a source of ideas and inspiration. It is culture in the making.

Questions

1. What are values?

2. Describe the purpose of a mission.

3. Explain what is meant by business culture.

4. Determine which of Handy's culture types Syngenta adopts, using evidence from the case study to support your decision.

Task

Make preparation for carrying out an investigation into the organisational vision and culture in your school/college. This will probably include carrying out a survey of the staff and students and possibly interviewing the senior team. At the end of the investigation evaluate how successful the organisation is in achieving its vision and embedding its culture throughout all operations.

What have you learned?

In exactly fifteen words, write something you have learned from this session.