

# Strategic relationships



A design strategy is design meanings. “*Persuasion*” and “*design*” are two different postures about the relationships. When we talk about “the strategic management of the relationships”, we try to transcend the model that the organization uses to design interventions in the community. The organizations can only see what is inside its territory of credibility, that that it has clipped starting from its interpretation system. The limits of the territory of credibility are defined by the paradigms of the organization. The corporate environment is much wider than that which the organization considers. It is necessary, to see other things of the corporate environment, to maintain a constant redefinition of those parameters that define the position in the context.

In this work we present for points to development of a strategic process dedicated to the design and management of relationships. We reflect from the necessity of redefining and designing some conceptual and methodological tools that allow an organization to reorient its activity in a

social context of permanent and unpredictable changes. In this framework, we propose four factors of development of strategic relationships:

- 1) Symbolic space of competition, where to insert the corporate proposal
- 2) Common action, as base for the development of strategic relationships
- 3) The value of the proposal is the "reason to be" of the relationships
- 4) The dynamics of the processes facilitates and contains the emergency of events

## Symbolic space of competition

The proposal elaborated by the company, what it has to offer to the market, will be developed in an interaction space; that transcends to the physical conception of products, organisms and buildings. The space where the proposal must be inserted is in the mind and people's heart. This is the place where the fragments of perceived messages are integrated and all the concepts take signification.

The competition factors in this space are beliefs, values, ideas, habits and attitudes. A company doesn't necessarily compete with other products or brands. It competes with factors of credibility, trust and interpretation. For that reason it should guide its processes to look for a place in this dynamic, complex and personalized universe to get confidence and commitment.

The intrinsic qualities (generally related with physical inputs) of the proposal satisfy concrete necessities; but the symbolic qualities (attributes with the promise and the services) build a conditions of public's perception. If the organization doesn't develop symbolic categories, it doesn't generate indicators for an appropriate perception of the proposal and therefore it won't get the interest in its public.

## Common Action

The company is a productive structure. The results of its work will have existence starting from its relationships with the environment. It is not enough that the institution have good intentions and develop its work professionally, if nobody chooses its proposal.

All productive process loses sense if the community doesn't feel identified. In the case of a company, this circumstance is usually more visible. The company can develop an excellent product, but if nobody chooses it, that structure dies quickly. The product of an organization is its proposal; which anyway has the same aim if its clients don't value it.

Now, to develop this process of building and maintaining a strong links, the offer that the company carries out should contemplate in its design the necessities, the interests, habits and the stakeholders' expectations. This consideration gives the sense of "common action" to the relationship between the company and its public; which allows that the productive structure maintains its processes upgraded in function of the conditions of the environment.

If the organization ignores this interaction process in the definition and upgrade of the proposal, it can be caught in its own point of view, in "its version" of the reality. This implies that the organization can develop and maintain a proposal that does not have any correspondence with its stakeholders' interests.

## The value of the proposal

The proposal is "the reason to be" of the relationships for an organizations and what gives sense to its existence. And although this seems an obviation, it is one of the first signs that appears when what unites to the organization with their public empties of sense. The proposal loses value. The "reason to be" of the link enters a crisis.

In this frame, the figure of a "rigid organization" represents a system to which it is difficult to redefine its proposal, to respond to the environment and to manage with fluency its

relationships. The muscles of an organization are the technical and conceptual processes that give life to the structure that transforms the basic inputs in attractive proposals. When these processes crystallize, the values, ideas and mechanisms stagnate. The organization finishes this way locking in its own paradigms. The productive structure stops.

When the organizations meet with the impossibility of operating in this new competition space they begin to close up. The culture of the organization, their values, their relationships, their patrimony, their own activity enters in crisis. The first impact of this process among the members of the organization is the sensation of instability and the uncertainty regarding what will happen to them in the future.

## Dynamics of the processes

The process of strategic design needs a compass. To visualize roads is also to build the future. The "raw materials" to visualize, to project and to design the future is not only composed by our technical competences; but also our beliefs, our values, our ideology, our perception regarding the changes and the opportunities. It is not enough with a plan to intervene in the community. The strategy is a process. A closed plan, it becomes a trap when it does not consider the dynamics of the society.

People choose and get committed with the proposals of the organizations, not only for the intrinsic qualities, but essentially for the global perception that they have of the offer and the development possibilities that is offered. The perception is built starting from the interaction. Habits, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, experiences, are intertwined to generate an image of trust and credibility. Therefore, the proposal carried out by the organization to its public must be related to these personal and symbolic processes.

Marcelo Manucci