

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

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Abstract

The paper examined how proper information management contributes to effective and efficient resource management in government business. It also identified information as a vital tool for decision making and implementation. Solutions were proffered to the identified crisis emanating from improper handling of information in public and private organizations. Secondary data were sourced through relevant books and journals, official publications, etc. The study found out that the accurate generation of information and proper transfer of such information to its desired destination could make a lot of difference between profit and loss, boom or doom and even stability, or anarchy at the governmental level, it concluded that situational communication approach cum the introduction of the computer internet would stimulate effective handling and maintenance of local governments' myriad of resources, hence, government officials must guide against causes of project failure. Community participation is desirable.

Introduction

In all human organizations, be it social, political, economic/Business, profit and non-profit as well as governmental and non-governmental, the place of information as a vital tool for decision making cannot be underestimated. Succinctly put, information is the bedrock of accurate and adequate decision making as well as efficiency and effectiveness in government business.

Either in business or government, the accurate generation of information and the proper transfer of such information to its desired destination can make a lot of difference between profit and loss, boom or doom and even stability or anarchy at the governmental level. This pre-supposes that information helps to reduce uncertainty and enhance stability and progress especially if it is properly managed. Thus, there is need for information to be guided and guarded (Mathew, 1976).

Information is the transformation of data into appropriate and useful tool for manager to enhance decision making. It is a result of the capture of data made available to decision makers (Higgins, 1976), These data refers to the manifestation of events, which evolves as unorganized facts and serves as basic rudiments for organizational paperwork or data processing.

Succinctly put, information is the process whereby ideas are passed or transferred from the sender to the receiver. Any means that an individual uses to transfer meanings, ideas, feelings, emotions or attitudes to other is information. Messages are transferred through oral/verbal, written and non-verbal and other media.

Information management is a vital strategy and technique through which man, money and materials are effectively harnessed with a view to enhancing overall organizational development and achieving results, the set goals and objectives of such organization.

Information Management Strategies

A number of information management strategies that can bring about efficient and effective resource management are discussed as follows:

1. Internet Information Management

Knowledge and rapid exchange of information are rapidly driving the world economic and social order. It is becoming more important for businesses, rural and urban communities, governments and particularly academics to have access to information networks in order to survive the emerging information revolution.

Present generation is being referred to as the information age with emphasis on the sharing of information through computer networking on a global level. Apart from sharing information within organizations which initially give rise to local and Wide Area Network, there was the need to also

share globally across heterogeneous platforms. This process give rise to different kinds of networks, which eventually led to the internet. Access to information networks globally, creates new opportunities and provides seeded for numerous benefits. It has therefore become paramount to this stage for Local Governments in Nigeria to set up Local Government wide network and connecting such network to the internet.

Quest for Globalization is at increasing rate in this 23st century and internet serves as mega tool in the world of information technology (IT), which seems to be the backbone of globalization. The term internet is a network of thousands of computers all over the world that can communicate with one another to exchange messages and share information. Internet has spread all over the world, -breaking the barriers of time, space, race and language thereby bring the world into a small global villiage (Joshua, 2003J).

The advent of internet has contributed immensely to the work of research, collection of information in all disciplines, coverage recreation, health, sports, shopping, employment. opportunities, scholarship and admission into schools abroad. Information is a resource to be managed. The value of information increases, as the management task becomes more complex. Managers are found on all levels and in all functional areas of the organization. The managers augment their basic decision-making and communication skills with computer usage to increase their productivity and performance levels.

Since the mother of all networks (Internet) permits every interested user access to a very wide variety of information freely, it therefore becomes imperative that anyone likely to partake in the events of the very near future must aim at getting connected. (Oduote, 1997). Most of the services are not exclusive to the Internet; they can also be found on other communication networks. However, those services Internet services include; electronic mail, file Transfer protocol (FTP) remote login (Telnet) News WWW (World Wide Web).

2. Modern Methods of Information Dissemination

The available recent strategies of information dissemination employed by Osun State government to get feedback from various communities on government programmes and to entertain problems and travails of the citizenry are hereby enumerated as follows: -

- a) Telephone(GSM)
- b) Telex
- c) Television
- d) E-mail
- e) Multimedia PC

3. Two-Way Traffic Information Strategy

For effective management and maintenance of government human and material resources, the flow of information in both directions (downwards and upwards) must be adequately stimulated. This can be actualized through periodic conferences, private talks between superior officers and subordinates, and an open-door policy on the part of executives, suggestion systems and joint consultation. (Ugwuanyi, 1984).

- i) Periodic conference
- ii) Private talks between HOD and subordinates
- iii) Open-Door policy
- iv) Suggestion system
- v) Joint consultation

4. Participatory information approach as a weapon (or creating an enabling environment for community based project implementation.

Oyeniyi Oloyede opined that active community participation and involvement especially in matters that affect them is a sine-qua-non to proper resources handling and maintenance, (Oloyede, 1997). This is reinforced by genuine acceptance by officials; of the right of community members; to determine their needs and allow them to direct their efforts as opposed to pseudo-participation for programmes decided by officials as this is capable of encouraging people's dependence on government to do things for them. (Opadiran, 1997).

Some of the ways by which participatory communication can be guaranteed/put in place at the Local Government level include:

- i) The use of Radio for mobilization for adequate participation in Local affairs with materials support is desirable;
- ii) Local government can encourage various communities to choose their priority and decide on the types and levels of special rates they wish the council to impose on its indigenes to finance and for maintenance or reactivation of the Local Government projects sited in their locality e.g. users charge for roads constructed or pipe borne water installed,
- iii) Mobilization and re-orientation of the political and Government functionaries towards Local Government activities to secure their support and willingness for the implementation of the activities are laudable and;
- iv) The members of the public must be accessible to the Government while the former should be given opportunities to question the latter's choice of a particular programme at a quarterly ACCOUNTABILITY FORUM at the Town Hall;
- v) Another idea of stimulating community's participation in government programmes is to organize workshops for proper orientation for community leaders.
- vi) Regular Quarterly 'village square' and not "rent a crowd" approach where people are gathered occasionally to listen to the chairman and other officials either at the commissioning or foundation- laying of projects. This latter practice however makes the people passive rather than active participant i.e. ("rent a crowd").
- vii) The foregoing can be complemented by enlarged body comprising the chairman, Information Officers, Community Development Officers, leaders of community development councils/associations to advise on development projects and bridge the communication gap between the Local Government and the constituent groups.

Recommendations

Our recommendations for the enhancement of efficient management of resources are as follows:-

- i) A well equipped information unit to be established at the Local Government level. Their functions should include dissemination of Local Government activities as well as coordination of peoples' reactions,
- ii) Elected councilors should be encouraged to meet their people in various wards regularly to disseminate and gather information on the activities of Local Governments and aggregate these in the interest of the indigenes/electorates;
- iii) For adequacy in establishing the wishes of the people, acceptability of government policies, coordination of available data and information; the Local Government should establish the department of research and statistics,
- iv) Encouragement and necessary support should be given to various communities (if only within their area committees) to discuss government activities in their different local governments and communicate their position as appropriate to the States and Federal Government with a view to seeking support for laudable programmes;
- v) Local Government should guide against ad-hoc policies and should be guided by established procedures for plans and " policy -making to allow for inputs from within and outside the council Intra and inter-departmental rapport; and cooperation at getting some input from the public must be encourages at all time;
- vi) Functionaries must be prudent, imbibe the culture of maintenance and inculcate same in the general populace;
- vii) Management must stress careful and considerate handling of public properties, constant repairs and not replacement;

- viii) Nigeria can reach a greater height of technological development if our policy makers and society leaders eschew corruption and indiscipline and strive to manage the country's resources with transparency, honesty, selflessness, and imbibe the enduring culture of functional maintenance,
- ix) Policy makers should consistently develop and implement programmes that meet "the yearnings and aspirations of the grass root people.

Conclusion

There is certainly no denying the fact that effective information plays a fundamental role in the proper handling and maintenance of Local Government resources as espoused in the work. It is incumbent upon managers/officials to communicate effectively and improve their managerial effectiveness. Essentially, organizations must note that managerial communication should be situation specific. Why is this necessary? It is important because information strategies that are appropriate for one situation may be inappropriate for the next; due to extraneous variables.

In essence, a contingency approach to organizational information enables the modern information officers to identify communication strategies that will maximize managerial effectiveness, as there does not appear to be one channel which is superior in all cases for the purpose of passing information. (Ojuri, 2000)

Finally, since this modern approach promotes the best configuration of information strategies and procedures for specific situation in organizational life, it can then be conveniently argued that situational communication approach will stimulate effective handling and maintenance of Local Government myriad of resources. Besides, the introduction of the computer internet has brought another dimension to information generation and dissemination making it a complex web as against the single channel model of information. The future of information management seems very bright with a lot of improvement and development in the computer world of today.

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