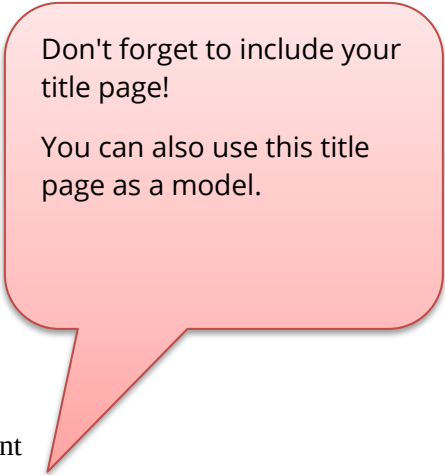




Don't forget to include your title page!

You can also use this title page as a model.

Sample Student

Week 8: Case Study: Accenture Human Capital

CLASS TITLE

DATE

Notice how the case study analysis opens with an introduction that discusses Accenture and who they are as an organization.

Also note that the introduction section does *not* have a heading.

Accenture serves as an example of an organization that built a sustainable competitive advantage by aligning Human Resources Management (HRM) with its business strategy. They recognized the highly competitive industry they were in, and in turn, they formed a strategic partnership with Human Resources to develop resources and capabilities that differentiate themselves from their competitors (Barlett & Ghoshal, 2002). The relationship between the business and HRM could also be described as a *configurational perspective* because of the interdependence between HRM practices and organizational performance. According to the study titled “Strategic Human Resources Management: Integrating the Universalistic, Contingent, Configurational and Contextual Perspective,” a configurational perspective introduces a synergetic, interdependent relationship, which is clearly seen in the role HRM plays in Accenture (Martín-Alcázar, Romero-Fernández, & Sánchez-Gardey, 2005).

Background

The next section is the Background section and this *does* have a Level 1 heading.

Notice the use of research so far in the analysis. The writer is pulling not only from the case study but also from outside sources.

Human Resources played a strategic role in gaining and sustaining Accenture’s competitive advantage by building competency-based talent strategies to support their “people- intensive business” (Price, Narayanan, & Weber, 2016). They implemented HR practices to ensure they build, develop, and retain their greatest resources—employees. It has impacted how HR approaches recruitment, training, development, and retention activities, all of which play key roles in creating Accenture’s core competencies. **Listed below are HRM activities that helped Accenture gain its competitive advantage, according to Barney & Wright’s (1998) VRIO framework:**

This background information is useful in explaining why Franklin drafted an unsuccessful bid for ZXP in the first place (he relied too heavily on Accenture's position in the marketplace).

Value: Accenture has created value through their human resource function by implementing HR activities that have a direct impact on the business’s profitability. The

business relies on HR's expertise in ensuring highly qualified talent pools are available at any given time. They have also heavily invested in training and development programs to ensure employees remain challenged, engaged, and educated. Because of this, they have staffing solutions that enable teams to work on a project-by-project level across different industries as they have the right talents in place (Price et al., 2016).

Rareness: Since Accenture is in a highly competitive professional service industry, they have differentiated themselves by building customized client teams based on what is needed for any given project. They search for individuals with rare characteristics by focusing on skills, experience, and development specifications and are thus able to offer highly crafted, individualized teams to their clients. It would be rare for Accenture to present the same team in other engagements as clients and projects demand different requirements.

Organization: Human Resources has helped Accenture achieve its competitive advantage through the systems and practices they have in place to build a client team. Not only is HR involved throughout the employee cycle, but they also play an essential role in matching the right employees to a project. They use financial and solution models to identify resources needed to complete the work as well as the cost implications. Due to these values HR brings to the business, they form strong relationships with colleagues and clients and have played an integral role in helping the company set its competitive advantage.

Issue Under Examination

Despite the good reputation and strong partnership Human Resources has with the business, they still face challenges that put the company to the test. One of the key issues

The next segment is the issue under examination, which, in this case, is the failed original bid from Accenture.

Your task is to determine why the original bid failed and draft recommendations for crafting a winning bid. It is important for your audience to clearly understand the issue under examination so they can understand your recommendations.

identified in the case was Accenture's challenge in winning the bid with ZXP. It was critical for Accenture to win this bid as it falls under the two most profitable segments of the organization: Products as an operating group and North America as a geographical region. Accenture recognized that losing this bid could greatly impact their profitability and potentially raise more challenges for future business opportunities.

Given their highly competitive industry, Accenture competes with other professional service providers who could essentially perform the same services as they do. They serve clients across a "broad range of industries" and geographic regions, which has led to numerous competitions from global consulting groups to big four public audit firms (Price et al., 2016). Although Accenture possesses human strategies that are hard to imitate, such as specialized recruitment and development programs and the capability to build customized client teams, other firms could deliver the same services, but at a lower price. Since more clients, including ZXP, began demanding to see justifications for costs associated with projects, Accenture was faced with a challenge to justify why they were worth an additional \$5 million. Tyler Franklin, the project manager, failed to recognize the current state of ZXP and provided standard recommendations that did not meet ZXP's expectations. This was ineffective because not only was the total cost higher than Accenture's competitor, but they also missed the opportunity to show how nonfinancial values are often worth more in the long run.

Discussion

The "pyramid" Franklin constructed and the contract type he chose may not have been the most cost-effective way to manage this client. Since ZXP was considering outsourcing the application and maintenance work using a help desk system, Franklin

It is effective to state the problem toward the end of this section as it nicely sets readers up for a deeper discussion of it.

The Discussion is where you explain the problem that you identified in the previous section, using information from the case itself to set the stage for your forthcoming recommendations.

could have presented other options that would have given his client the flexibility to negotiate price, tweak the scope of services, and make revisions to the employment population ratio as needed (Price et al., 2016) based on external demands as well as profitability.

Furthermore, he failed to customize the proposal based on the external environment and what ZXP was trying to accomplish. It appears that he designed the proposal without taking into consideration the current state of ZXP's ERP system and why they decided to outsource the function in the first place. He used the fixed-fee contract calculation, which may not have been applicable to what ZXP was trying to accomplish. Since the majority of the legwork has already been done, they may decide later that they do not need the same employee population ratio or as many workers in specific roles as Accenture anticipated, which would save some cost. However, because the proposal was on a fixed-fee contract, not only did the price come up higher than expected, but ZXP would not be able to make changes to adapt to their external environment.

It is important to not only state the facts of the case ("He used a fixed-fee contract calculation."), but also explain *why* this is a problem. This demonstrates critical thinking and an ability to select and apply relevant concepts and methodologies to this specific case.

It appears that Franklin also did not do his due diligence in researching what ZXP was willing to pay and failed to recognize the customization needed for this bid. He could argue that he knew more than what was presented in the RFP alone to justify the cost of his proposal, but at the end of the day, clients are looking to obtain the lowest price for the project. He also failed to incorporate nonfinancial data to his proposal, as a result, ZXP could only see the final costs instead of other intangible benefits Accenture could bring to their company.

When analyzing the problem and determining possible solutions, it is important to think about the issue from the point of view of the person or organization involved. Why did they make this choice? What could they have done differently?

Recommendations

While you may be tempted to jump right to the recommendations, it is important for your own critical thinking process to work through the sections that come before. It also is important information for your audience to have; without it, they may not understand your proposed solutions or see their value as you do.

Note that use of the first person is appropriate in a case study analysis. This does not mean that you make recommendations based on feeling or personal opinion alone. The assignment still requires that you make expert recommendations based on the case and on external research and industry knowledge.

Since Franklin is now aware of ZXP's focus on cost savings, **my recommendation** is that he should first thoroughly research what Accenture already has to win the bid. He could do this by utilizing his internal network to collaborate with teams who are currently working with ZXP. He could use his social network to obtain a better understanding of the ways in which this project could intertwine with existing projects. **He should also utilize any "structural embedding" internal connections to interrelate and share the importance of Accenture winning this deal. Because this type of connection is highly regarded, he is more likely to get buy-in from colleagues to work collaboratively to find a solution (Cross, Liedtka & Weiss, 2005).**

Maintain a professional writing voice when using first person. Signal phrases like "My recommendation..." or "I recommend" are appropriate.

Notice the use of external research in this section. Because there are no workable recommendations or solutions in the case itself, you may find yourself citing outside sources more so than the case study in this particular section.

Then, Franklin should look into merging some of the roles identified in his bid with existing projects so they could utilize the knowledge, processes, and resources already in place. Considering the importance of winning this bid to Accenture, they are more inclined to work collaboratively since all their projects would be at risk if Franklin does not win the bid. They could perhaps offer a "bundle" deal to ZXP and present the proposal in a way that shows all the projects working together to create a more efficient operation for ZXP (Bower, 2001). This could also lead to cost savings because these project teams could share best practices, expertise, and resources required to complete their projects (Hansen & Nohria, 2004). As a result, they may no longer need 60 employees to work on this deal since they would be merging with the other existing projects.

However, a caveat to consider is the possible challenges that may arise when merging teams. Each team has their own sub-cultures, so in order to ensure the success of this collaboration, Accenture should also do their due diligence in learning how each

Notice how the writer acknowledges a possible challenge with one of the proposed solutions. It is important to evaluate your recommendations from all angles and consider possible obstacles and even name them in your analysis.

team operates and how their cultures would mesh (Harding & Rouse, 2007). This is where Human Resources plays a critical role: in helping define the values of this new team, translating those values into expectations, and coming up with a plan for working effectively to serve the new project with ZXP (Harding & Rouse, 2007).

Once he gets the buy-in to cross-pollinate teams, Franklin should then focus on pricing the project in a way that is more reasonable for ZXP to consider. I recommend using the “Value Based” contract as the fees are created for existing Accenture clients and are often combined with other pricing approaches (Price et al., 2016). In addition, instead of presenting the proposals with purely cost-related labor data, he should also include nonfinancial information, which is often more valuable in determining an organization’s long-term economic performance.

I also recommend that Franklin partner closely with Human Resources when incorporating nonfinancial data in his new proposal. Since ZXP considered ERP as the most important management tool in the company, he should emphasize the importance of choosing a reputable vendor who knows their business well and of having HRM practices in place to ensure they have best talents working on the project. They could not afford another year of the ERP system not meeting expectations, so they need to choose a vendor that employs the best talent in the industry who can come right away with solutions.

Finally, when he meets with ZXP to present the proposal again, I recommend he set up the presentation in this order: first, he should provide background information on Accenture’s current list of projects with ZXP to show how this bid would fit well with their overall business strategy. He could then share the plan of cross-pollinating teams to

Not only has the writer explored possible solutions to the problem, she has also explored the presentation of the recommendations, recognizing that the information is only *part* of the bidding process. The other part is marketing the plan and re-establishing a trust relationship with the client.

create a more efficient operation for ZXP. He can then present the new pricing based on a “Value Based” contract and explain the cost savings of bundling all the products. He should also incorporate Accenture’s HRM practices to showcase their ability to create and maintain the best talent pool in the industry with the most appropriate skills, training, and experience. By doing this, he could focus on justifying why their labor may cost more than their competitors’: they want to make sure the right decisions on the supply side fall in place so they can service the business appropriately. Although the price may slightly be higher, doing it the right way from the start far exceeds a lower upfront cost. He should then conclude by highlighting the benefits of partnering with the “World’s Most Admired Company,” and how it could help ZXP differentiate itself from its competitors and help boost their company reputation by making the investment to ensure they provide quality service, even when they outsource their functions.

While the introduction does not have a Level 1 heading, the conclusion should have its own heading. This helps transition readers to the very end of the paper. Aim to wrap up the analysis and leave readers with something to think further about.

Conclusion

While Franklin missed some opportunities at the outset of the bidding process with ZXP, he still has an opportunity to reevaluate and reassert Accenture's competitive advantage. If he is able to recognize the financial constraints of ZXP and customize the bid to better suit their needs, while still valuing the added benefit of Accenture's expert services and reputation in the industry, the final business relationship should be advantageous for both parties.

References

Don't forget a properly formatted reference list! Remember the formatting rules for the reference list and ensure it goes on its own page after the conclusion of the paper.

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