

An introduction to Managerial Anthropology

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ABSTRACT

Business Anthropology has been in use for quite a while. While anthropology is being used extensively across different functions of business management, it is not yet recognized as a specialized branch of anthropology. The objective of this article is to introduce the concept of Managerial Anthropology and how Anthropology is used in every aspect of management functions.

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Introduction

Knowingly or unknowingly every manager be it business or non-business organizations, adopts different anthropological approaches, tools and techniques in delivering his roles and responsibilities. Anthropology being a wide area of study on almost all aspects of human life, has a significant applicability in the management as well.

In the recent past the concept of "Business Anthropology" is widely in circulation and many scholars have contributed to this area of study due to which it is now treated as an independent branch of Anthropology. But when we talk about management, it is not only restricted to business and its scope spreads across different organizations/institutions which cannot be termed as "Business".

Managerial Anthropology:

George R Terry [1] defines management as a process "consisting of planning, organizing, actuating and controlling, performed to determine and accomplish the objectives by the use of people and resources." Joseph Massie [1] defines management as "'Management is the process by which co-operative group directs actions towards common goals." Tho Harmann, William Scott [3] say "Management is a social and technical process that utilises resources, influences human action and facilitates changes in order to accomplish an organization's goals."

From the above definitions two things come out clearly:

a. **Management is not only restricted to Business:** Where ever any planning, organizing, actuating etc. are involved, Management has a role to play. Not for profit organizations, personal life management, informal events management etc. are some examples which though are not business per say but still involve 'management'

b. **Management Essentially involves people:** Management is heavily dependent on people to get the things done. Be it business or not-for profit organization, ultimate aim of the organizations is the maximization of stakeholder value. Thus the whole management process can be summarized as "by the people, of the people and for the people"

Now let us discuss some of the branches of Management and how Anthropology plays a role in those.

Human Resource Management and Anthropology: Human resource management essentially is a process of attracting, selecting, training, assessing, rewarding and separation management of human resources. In the era of a shrunken world and multinational operations, where an organization has to work with people from different cultural backgrounds, it becomes absolute necessity to understand the local cultures and preferences. Unless the organization is culturally sensitive and does its homework, it will be difficult for companies to attract the required people into the organizations.

The training programs, assessment and rewards policies are also heavily dependent on the ethnicity, cultural difference or geography of the operations. Same companies operating in different geographies are found to have different work related policies and practices for different geographies. This includes differences in work hours to leave policies to appraisals to rewards and recognitions. Thus the function of Human Resource management essentially includes the cultural anthropology and ethnographic understanding and management.

Marketing Management: Another most popular branch of management is Marketing management. The companies operating globally have now a popular motto of "Think Global, Act Local". Big companies such as McDonalds and Honda are successful on a global scale, but their products have to be tailored to the requirements of individual countries. Julian Amey, Principal Fellow at Warwick Manufacturing Group, argues that the key is not only to 'think global, act local', but also to 'share and network totally'. The whole Product lifecycle management now a days is driven by the local market conditions. The 5 Ps of marketing mix quoted by Philip Kotler [5] viz. Product, Price, promotion, place and packaging concentrate on the human response to each of these Ps as stimuli to exert desired response towards their products. Anthropology as a study of human behaviour and cultural preferences, play a vital role in the marketing mix design and implementations.

Financial Management: "Financial Management is an area of financial decision making, harmonizing individual motives and enterprise goals." (Weston and Brigham).[6] From sourcing funds to allocation of funds and taking care of stake holder interests. While raising funds or allocating funds, local traditions and beliefs need to be taken into account, for example in case if

Islamic Banking, interest is treated as unholy and hence you cannot offer interest to raise your funds.???? Also where you invest funds and how you distribute the profits is driven by the local cultures and beliefs to some extent. Hence Financial management also does involve the anthropological concepts and studies.

In the 1980s, a number of economic sociologists developed empirical investigation on the social structure and cultural characteristics of financial markets, especially in the US. Such pioneering researcher included contributions from [7], and was based on methods such as ethnographic observation or social network analysis. In the 1990s, a number of researchers from the field of science and technology studies such as Karin Knorr-Cetina and Donald A. MacKenzie started also developing empirical research in this area, with close attention to the role of expert knowledge and technology in financial activities.

This justifies the need of anthropological perspectives in financial management.

Strategic Management: Nag,R.; Hambrick, D. C.; Chen, M.-J (2007) [8]. In "What is strategic management, really? Inductive derivation of a consensus definition of the field" define function of Strategic Management as "Strategic management analyzes the major initiatives taken by a company's top management on behalf of owners, involving resources and performance in internal and external environments." As per Business dictionary "The systematic analysis of the factors associated with customers and competitors (the external environment) and the organization itself (the internal environment) to provide the basis for maintaining optimum management practices. The objective of strategic management is to achieve better alignment of corporate policies and strategic priorities. Thus the strategic management is operating the business optimally under given macro-economic conditions.

There is a specialized area of study in economics known as "Cultural Economics" the application of include the study of religion, social norms. social identity, fertility, beliefs in redistributive justice, ideology, hatred, terrorism, trust and the culture of economics. A general analytical theme is how ideas and behaviors are spread among individuals through the formation of social capital, social networks and processes such

as social learning, as in the theory of social evolution and information cascades. Methods include case studies and theoretical and empirical modeling of cultural transmission within and across social group.

Production Management: According to Elwood Spencer Buffa [4] "Production management deals with decision-making related to production processes so that the resulting goods or service is produced according to specification, in the amount and by the schedule demanded and at minimum cost." Production Management thus is a function of producing what is demanded in the quantities that are demanded with optimal utilization of 4 M's Viz. Men, Machinery, Materials and money. Technology may have reduced the involvement of men in the production process but still the whole production Management process invariably involves human decision making. The objective of Production also is to minimize the lead time from concept to market so that the "HOT CAKES" can be sold. The Anthropological tools like motivational theories, attitudes and beliefs towards the work and the products itself provide a quiver full of weapons to the production manager to perform his functions effectively.

In conclusion we can say that what-ever may be the function of a manager, consciously or unconsciously use one or the other anthropological approach or a tool to perform his day to day responsibilities.

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