

Rural Women Empowerment – Benchmarking Practices

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Abstract:

Benchmarking for Best practices has covered many industries during the last two decades. The scope of the business may vary, but the importance of best practices for women empowerment has been a common business objective and the capacity of organizations to implement best practices has become very important to achieve success in the long run. Therefore, the objective of this study is to identify the best practices in achieving organizational excellence among Women Empowerment organisations. The study is based on the critical success factors for organization excellence such as Strategic planning and control, organization process climate, organization excellence benchmarking, team effectiveness, employee morale, empowerment readiness, ethical work culture and customer satisfaction from the literature review. A total sample of 100 respondents of which 50 are employees from different levels in Rastriya Seva Samithi (RASS) and 50 respondents are women beneficiaries from women empowerment programmes conducted by RASS in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh. The results of the study provide an insight to Women Empowerment organizations in Andhra Pradesh on the critical success factors that are appropriate to their needs in order to achieve organizational excellence.

Keywords: Benchmarking, customer satisfaction, organization excellence, strategic planning, women empowerment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizations are constantly looking for new ways and methodologies to improve their performance and gain a competitive advantage. As they seek improvements in their own processes, many organizations recognize the importance of learning from best practices that have been achieved by other organizations. By removing the need to reinvent the wheel and providing the potential to adopt proven practices, benchmarking has become an important methodology for providing a fast track to achieving organizational excellence in terms of women empowerment [*From Everything You Need to Know About Benchmarking by Robim Mann*]. As such **Benchmarking** is “the process of identifying, understanding and adapting outstanding practices from organizations anywhere in the world to help an organization for its excellence”. Thus a **successful Benchmarking** requires careful selection and manipulation of comparable measures which can contribute to identify and implement best practices towards women empowerment.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various studies were implemented to identify the critical success factors in achieving organizational excellence in different industries such as Enterprise Resource Planning (Somers and Nelson, 2001); project management (Pinto and Kharbands, 1995) and healthcare (Hirshfield and Lee, 2006). Zairi and Whymark (2003) identified seventeen critical success factors for organizational excellence and among them top management commitment, leadership, policy and strategy were identified as key factors in achieving organizational excellence. According to the European Foundation for Quality Management (1999) factors such as top management commitment and leadership, people management, policy and strategy, partnership and resources management and management by processes, are generally considered as the initial inputs to the implementation of total quality. Mann and Saunders (2005) identified a strong correlation between “Enablers” and “Business Results” when studying Baldrige self-assessment results. Their data indicated that organizations with excellent approaches to leadership, strategic planning, customer and market focus, information and analysis, human resource focus and process management are more likely to achieve excellent Business Results (composed of customer satisfaction results, financial and market results, human resource results, and organizational effectiveness results).

Moreover, Baidoun (2003) indicated that in the models of excellence, essentially customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction and a favourable impact on society are achieved through leadership driving and strategy, people partnership, resources and processes, which lead ultimately to excellence in business results. Kanji and Tambi (1999) indicated that in order to achieve business excellence, it is necessary for any organisation to adopt a TQM process and the critical success factors which provide the core elements of excellence. In support of this further, Kanji (2000) confirmed a solid relationship exist among the identification of critical success factors and organizational excellence. However, today many organizations are throwing deep focus in bringing out various factors for organizational excellence. But little empirical research has been carried out in Women Empowerment organizations in Service Industry.

Organizational excellence is defined as outstanding practice in managing organizations and delivering values to customers and other stakeholders (Moullin, 2007). These definitions are the short forms of those given by the European

Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM, 1999) and demonstrate a clear relationship between organizational performance and organizational excellence.

III. IMPORTANCE OF STUDY IN THE PRESENT SCENARIO

Today contribution of women in economic development is growing with the advent of various women empowerment organizations. By the interests of the Government even rural women are able to make an edge for themselves thus competing with literate women from urban society and showing their capabilities in national and international ventures.

In most of the countries nearly 50% of the economy is being generated by women alone. But due to the social, cultural and economic barriers, women generally have low confidence, poor exposure to the outside world in general and much less to the business environment in particular and therefore need support in developing the confidence and abilities required to run an enterprise successfully. So women need support, counseling and training in order to become empowered which is the most significant and central component of the entire entrepreneurship development program for women. It touches their individual potential and makes her to understand her capabilities, enables her to look at the barriers and blocks [like fear, low self esteem lack of confidence etc. to reach her goal. In order to be successful as an entrepreneur a woman has to become empowered.

Hence it takes a great deal of courage and desire for her to actually try to become an entrepreneur, and she also needs persistence and determination to succeed in her effort. It is therefore, very important for the women empowerment organizations who work as facilitators to assist the woman to gain courage, persistence and the strong desire to become an entrepreneur as well as the confidence that she can so. [Entrepreneurship development for rural women, vol1, Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology]

This gap is being filled by many Government and private organizations who have taken up women empowerment as a challenge for instance MSME, ALEAP, COWE, RASS etc. But there is no proper survey being conducted to give a proper feed back on the performance of such women empowerment organizations. Even if conducted generally they compare with other organizations which are popular but there are no key factors well defined for Benchmarking. Therefore, it is important to study the critical success factors in achieving organizational excellence in order to enhance organizational excellence among Women Empowerment organisations. The results of this study are useful for further improvements in Women Empowerment organizations in Andhra Pradesh.

Benchmarking helps to assess the relative level of performance in key areas or activities in the organization and finding ways to close gaps in their performance. Hence this research is to highlight the best practices for organization excellence by identifying the key performance indicators by doing gap analysis between what is expected from such organizations by the environment today and where do they stand. Thus there is an urgent need to study and identify areas of scope for organizational excellence as they have a very important role to play in the process of women empowerment.

IV. PROBLEM DEFINITION

Though there are many organizations involved in women empowerment towards entrepreneurship no research study is being conducted on **Benchmarking Best practices for organizational excellence** which if continued may result in better growth and development of women empowerment organizations.

V. OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

1. To identify and assess the critical success factors for empowerment of women in women empowerment organizations in Andhra Pradesh.

VI. HYPOTHESIS

1. Women Empowerment organizations significantly Benchmark their empowerment in the dimensions like Strategic competence, Organization Process Climate, Team Effectiveness, Employee Morale, Empowerment readiness, ethical work culture and customer satisfaction.

VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research process begins with the formulation of a structured questionnaire which consists of both qualitative and quantitative research related questions regarding demographic details, strategy competence profile, organisation process climate, organisation excellence benchmarking, team effectiveness, employee morale, empowerment readiness and ethical work culture among employees and women beneficiaries of Women Empowerment programmes carried out by RASS organisation in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh. A Descriptive Research Methodology is used for this research study by collecting both Primary and Secondary data. The primary data was collected through personal interview and questionnaire administration to the employees and women beneficiaries of RASS organisation in Tirupati.

A five point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire with the values 1= not at all; 2 = very rarely ; 3 = sometimes ; 4 = mostly ; 5 = always. Data was then entered into the computer and henceforth analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) application. **Secondary data required for the research was collected from journals, text books, published articles, newspapers, organization reports, digital data and website of RASS organization.**

The data analysis was carried out using Factor analysis Method.

Characteristics of Respondents

Total respondents for the research study were 100 out of which 50 are employees of RASS organisation in Tirupati who are engaged in Women Empowerment Programs being carried out by the organisation. Other 50 respondents are women beneficiaries between the age group of 23 years to 65 years of women empowerment programmes carried out by RASS in Tirupati. All the respondents are involved in Women empowerment Programmes with an experience ranging from 3 to 15 years in different products like beauty care, SHGs, Tailoring etc. During the interaction with the respondents it was clear that various factors like lack of economic independence, lack of identity, urge to do something to prove themselves, exploring their skills and capability, overcome cultural barriers, family needs etc have made them to join with RASS. Nearly 65% of the respondents were school drop outs at primary or secondary level of education and 20% of the respondents were illiterates. Remaining 15 % were graduates with no jobs. Almost all the respondents are opting for Entrepreneurship due to the flexibility they find towards their work and personal life as they are married.

A questionnaire which was administered to the employees of RASS organization consists of Part – A with 55 questions and Part -B with 40 questions administered to 50 Women beneficiaries of RASS Women Empowerment Programmes.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The table consists of ten factors which were identified as critical success factors for organization excellence from the questionnaire. All the loadings, mean values and standard deviations are calculated by factor analysis method using SPSS for the complete data set and the findings are tabulated in Table – 1.

Table – 1 Part – A N = 50

S.no	Question / factor	Loading	Mean	Grand Mean
	Factor – 1 Strategic planning and control			
1	Organisation has clear mission with shared values	0.789	4.55	4.62
2	Organisation performs environmental scanning	0.742	4.80	
3	streamlines its processes to implement strategies	0.765	4.80	
4	Utilizes cross functional teams to solve problems	0.503	4.15	
5	Output delivered to society is of high quality	0.871	4.70	
6	Organization conducts Total quality strategic audits	0.738	4.85	
	Factor – 2 Employee Participation in Decision Making			
7	contribution of employees in project improvements	0.835	4.55	4.55
	Factor – 3 Quality Work Life			
8	Employees are recognized and rewarded	0.800	4.65	4.73
9	Performance standards are high in organization	0.792	4.80	
10	Employees have mutual trust, respect and support	0.741	4.85	
11	Open minded with others without any discrimination	0.774	4.60	
12	Feedback is used for guidance and problem solving	0.739	4.55	
13	Supply of sufficient funds and equipment to finish job	0.652	4.90	
14	Management concern for employee growth	0.928	4.55	
15	Physical working conditions in the organisation	0.732	4.95	
16	Involvement of employees in decision making	0.813	4.75	
	Factor – 4 Employee Reward & Recognition			
17	Leadership is accepted and rewarded on expertise	0.777	4.65	4.80
18	Information sharing is accurate open and available	0.863	4.95	
	Factor – 5 Employee Morale			
19	Appropriate stress levels exist among employees job	0.731	4.94	3.25
20	High standard of moral behaviour expected at all levels	-0.800	4.40	
	Factor – 6 Encouraging Creativity			
21	Creativity and innovativeness among employees	0.656	4.30	4.30
	Factor – 7 Knowledge Base			
22	Every team has enough knowledge about their subject	0.806	4.85	4.85
	Factor – 8 Team Effectiveness			
23	Teams can understand basic issues and problems	0.907	4.90	

24	Teams are objective and creative	0.727	4.50	4.73
25	Consideration for views of others in the team	0.666	4.65	
26	Team members communicate clearly	0.754	4.85	
27	Teams actively participate to solve problems	0.769	4.75	
Factor – 9 Ethical Work Culture				
28	Employees trust that conflicts can be resolved fairly	0.819	4.90	3.48
29	Organization thinks what is supported by major people	0.912	4.45	
30	Employee satisfaction with current work	0.819	4.90	

Part- B N = 50

S.No	Factor -10 Satisfaction of Empowered Women	Loading	Mean	Grand Mean
31.	Provision of enough resources throughout the program	0.713	4.84	3.89
32.	Duration of the program was suitable enough	0.488	4.56	
33.	Organisation has clear mission / goals towards women empowerment	0.713	4.56	
34.	Covered all activities promised to women beneficiaries	0.933	4.84	
35.	Understood importance of education for women	0.984	4.72	
36.	Proper utilization of generated income	-0.554	2.92	
37.	Increased self respect	0.744	4.66	
38.	Improved communication skills	0.920	4.46	
39.	Gained knowledge about various approaches for self development	0.833	4.16	
40.	Able to resolve conflicts easily	0.877	4.00	
41.	Women can help/ guide family members and others	0.877	4.24	
42.	Ready to visit different places as per the need	0.812	4.48	
43.	Trainers were cooperative through out the program	0.984	4.78	
44.	Able to implement all her ideas and knowledge when required	0.845	3.24	
45.	Program has addition to literacy / education	-0.632	2.46	
46.	Participated against social issues (dowry, alcoholism, etc)	0.895	1.94	
47.	Women have improved self decision making skills	0.920	4.44	
48.	Improvement in technical and practical skills through training	0.756	3.06	
49.	Women feel that family planning is important	0.759	4.54	
50.	Have enough awareness about family health and hygiene	0.759	3.80	
51.	Successful in taking decisions as per the need of the hour	0.718	3.90	
52.	Objectives of the program were meeting her requirements	0.685	4.32	
53.	Learned being independent and in control	0.915	3.88	
54.	Can delegate and manage things better at home / outside	0.845	4.50	
55.	Improved enthusiasm towards work	0.915	4.08	
56.	Enough awareness about women rights	0.572	1.74	
57.	Individual decisions taken were successful in her business	0.667	3.94	
58.	Involvement in household infrastructure planning & implementing	0.689	4.50	
59.	Gained better people network	-0.667	4.30	
60.	Taking initiation in community development programmes	-0.736	2.04	
61.	Able to earn enough money to satisfy self / family needs	0.792	3.94	
62.	Can find enough time for every thing that she wants to do	0.895	4.30	
63.	Increased savings	0.854	4.00	
64.	The program brought a remarkable positive change in women	0.754	3.62	
65.	Participation in elections as voter	0.792	4.36	
66.	Change in attitude of family members towards women after training	0.817	4.18	
67.	Women gained more knowledge about economic improvement	0.854	3.86	
68.	Proper utilization of resources	0.660	4.22	
69.	Creative / innovative in business	0.581	3.50	
70.	Women can manage to get a loan	0.754	2.04	

From the table – 1 the critical success factors for organization excellence are Strategic planning and control, Employee Participation in Decision Making, Quality Work Life, Employee Reward & Recognition, Employee Morale, Encouraging Creativity, Knowledge Base, Team Effectiveness, Ethical Work Culture and Customer Satisfaction with reliability greater than 0.5.

VIII. DISCUSSION

The study reveals that Raastriya Seva Samithi, an Women Empowerment Organisation is significantly Benchmarking its excellence in the dimensions like Strategic competence, Organization Process Climate, Team Effectiveness, Employee Morale, Empowerment readiness and ethical work culture. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

From the review of the literature it is clear that there exists a solid relationship among identification of critical success factors and organizational excellence. The organization is also keen towards identification of critical success factors which help them to perform benchmarking for organization excellence which is proved here according to Kanji (2000).

Among the various CSFs identified in the study Strategic Planning and control, Quality work life, reward and recognition, Knowledge base and Team effectiveness are **always** contributing for Organisation excellence. Involving employees in decision making process, encouraging creativity among employees and satisfaction of women beneficiaries through various empowerment programmes conducted by the organization are **mostly** having positive impact on organization excellence whereas ethical work culture and employee morale are **sometimes** influencing organization excellence.

As the organization is keen towards women Empowerment programmes the management must invest their effort to bring up ethical work culture and employee morale which can help to develop a long term association among management and employees of the organization.

The study is confined to RAAS with limited sample size and hence the critical success factors and values might change when applied to other organizations in the same industry. So there is a scope for further research in this area.

Women empowerment organizations must come forward to identify their critical success factors and benchmark to design and carry out better women empowerment programs. This can be carried out as a continuous and regular process in order to sustain and compete with the challenges of women empowerment organizations.

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