



Performance Management System (PMS) In Indian Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs): A Practical Framework- A Case Study

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Abstract

Case Objective: Small and Medium enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in India's economic growth. SMEs operate in a competitive environment and therefore, it is important to ensure that their business is managed more efficiently and effectively. It is believed that performance management framework can help to identify weaknesses, clarify objectives, strategies and improve the process of performance management in SMEs. This study puts forward the Performance Management and Control (PMC) framework (Ferreira, A., & Otley, D. 2005, 2009) as a research tool to test the Performance management system in India's Small and medium enterprises, engaged in manufacturing activities. Some studies reveal that there is no proper/formal process of PMS adopted in some enterprises, but our findings suggest existence of well-established PMS.

Methodology: A case study approach was adopted where in PMS of an SME engaged in manufacturing activity was captured. In-depth interviews were held with the managers (top level and middle level) and information was sought about the existence of PMS at their unit. Literature review helped to identify the existence of the framework (Ferreira, A., & Otley, D. 2005, 2009), this framework was taken/identified as tool to test whether the same works in the PMS of the unit under study.

Research limitation: This paper is based on the findings from analysing single manufacturing unit in Goa (India).

Originality/Value: This paper is useful for both researchers and practitioners because it explores and identifies the factors in the use of performance management systems area in the Indian SMEs context.

Keywords: Performance Management System, SME Enterprises, Case Study, Manufacturing, Performance Control.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify the key activities included in the performance management process, by reviewing different definitions of performance management that exist in the literature. Management literature has been searched by using keywords such as “definition of performance management”, “performance management is defined”, “define performance management”, “performance management is”, “performance management’s model”, “performance management’s framework”, “performance management in SME” etc.

An attempt is made to investigate the gap between theory and practice in performance management in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and analyse it in the light of specific SME characteristics and needs, to identify how SMEs can develop their managerial practices for effective performance management.

Findings from Literature are Analysed to Identify a suitable Framework

Many researchers, who examined and explored performance management from an SME perspective, concluded that the majority of performance measurement projects, although theoretically valid, do not take into consideration the fundamental differences of SMEs, thus resulting in an informal adoption of performance management practices in SMEs (Cook and Wolverton, 1995; Garengo et al., 2005; Hudson-Smith and Smith, 2007; Garengo and Bititci, 2007; Wiesner et al., 2007, Ates, A., Garengo, P., Cocca, P., & Bititci, U. 2013).

Ferreira, A., & Otley, D. (2005) designed a framework called “performance management and control” to analyse the performance management and operation of Management controlling system. This framework suggested that an understanding of the structure of performance management within organisations requires the consideration of 12 key areas: (vision and mission, key factors, organization structure, strategies and plans, key performance measures, Target, evaluating, rewards, information flows, PMSs use, PMSs change, Strength and coherence). Some of the researchers in the area mentioned that performance management definitions and their constituent activities do not consider company size (Ates, A., & Bititci, U. 2011, Garengo et al., 2005; Hudson-Smith and Smith, 2007) and research on managing performance within the context of SMEs requires a deeper understanding of SME characteristics. It has also been mentioned that very little empirical and theoretical research has been carried out on PM in SMEs. (Ates, A., & Bititci, U. 2011).

Performance Management and Control Framework

Ferreira, A., & Otley, D. (2005, 2009) framework put in perspective the current understanding of performance management practices and the consequences of different performance management and controlling system. However, applicability of control system designs is limited, which may be due to fragmentary nature of the Human resource management system and control research.

Broadbent, J., & Laughlin, R. (2009) said that the concept of performance management systems are widely used in research but substantial differences of meaning has been attributed to the terms, within the context of human resource management (HRM) system and in relation to controlling individual (employee) behaviour (Ferreira and Otley 2009).

Essentially, performance management includes:

1. Planning work and setting expectations
2. Continually monitoring performance
3. Developing the capacity to perform
4. Periodically rating performance
5. Rewarding good performance

Broadbent (2009) argued that performance management research needs criteria to develop a coherent body of research. He suggested that it is necessary to examine performance management processes in their totality in order to understand the interconnections between the elements (e.g., objectives, strategies, measures, targets, incentive schemes, performance evaluation, information flows).

Otley (1999) proposed a framework for studying the operation of management control systems. Otley drew on the extant body of knowledge in the contingency theory of management accounting and on his personal experience in doing empirical research to inductively generate the framework. In essence, it highlights five central issues, which, he argues, need to be considered as part of the process of developing a coherent structure for performance management systems (Ferreira and Otley 2005, 2009).

The framework Ferreira and Otley (1999, 2005, 2009), has been extremely useful in conducting the case studies for a number of reasons First, its application was relatively straightforward, since the areas to be addressed are clear, and the questions asked appear meaningful at different levels of performance management system and control system. Second, the model had the advantage of simplifying the process of dealing with data. This is particularly important given that one of the typical difficulties of case based research is the need to deal with large amounts of information. These 12 questions are broad and cover the overall performance management framework. Second, the framework is very general and can be used to describe a wide range of performance management practices including EVA®, balanced scorecard, and budgeting and controlling system, culture.

Performance management and control (Ferreira and Otley 2005, 2009) framework aims to provide a broad view of the key aspects of PMSs and to form the basis upon which further investigations can be developed. Ferreira, A., & Otley, D. (2005, 2009) their performance management framework is based around the following 12 research questions:

Dimension	Focus of study	12 Research question for framework
1	Vision and mission	1. What is the vision and mission of the organization and how is this brought to the attention of managers and employees? What mechanisms, processes, and networks are used to convey the organization's overarching purposes and objectives to its members?
2	Key factors	2. What are the key factors that are believed to be central to the organization's overall future success and how are they brought to the attention of managers and employees?
3	Organization Structure	3. What is the organization structure and what impact does it have on the design and use of performance management systems (PMSs)? How does it influence and how is it influenced by the strategic management process?
4	Strategies and Plans	4. What strategies and plans has the organization adopted and what are the processes and activities that it has decided will be required for it to ensure its success? How are strategies and plans adapted, generated and communicated to managers and employees?
5	Key Performance measures	5. What are the organization's key performance measures deriving from its objectives, key success factors, and strategies and plans? How these are specified and communicated and what role do they play in performance evaluation? Are there significant omissions?
6	Target	6. What level of performance does the organization need to achieve for each of its key performance measures (identified in the above question), how does it go about setting appropriate performance targets for them, and how challenging are those performance targets?
7	Performance Evaluating	7. What processes, if any, does the organization follow for evaluating individual, group, and organizational performance? Are performance evaluations primarily objective, subjective or mixed and how important are formal and informal information and controls in these processes?
8	Rewards	8. What rewards — financial and/or non-financial — will managers and other employees gain by achieving performance targets or other assessed aspects of performance (or, conversely, what penalties will they suffer by failing to achieve them)?
9	Information flows	9. What specific information flows — feedback and feed forward —, systems and networks has the organization in place to support the operation of its PMSs?
10	PMSs use	10. What type of use is made of information and of the various control mechanisms in place? Can these uses be characterised in terms of various typologies in the literature? How do controls and their uses differ at different hierarchical levels?
11	PMSs change	11. How have the PMSs altered in the light of the change dynamics of the organization and its environment? Have the changes in PMSs design or use been made in a proactive or reactive manner?
12	Strength and coherence	12. How strong and coherent are the links between the components of PMSs and the ways in which they are used (as denoted by the above 11 questions)?

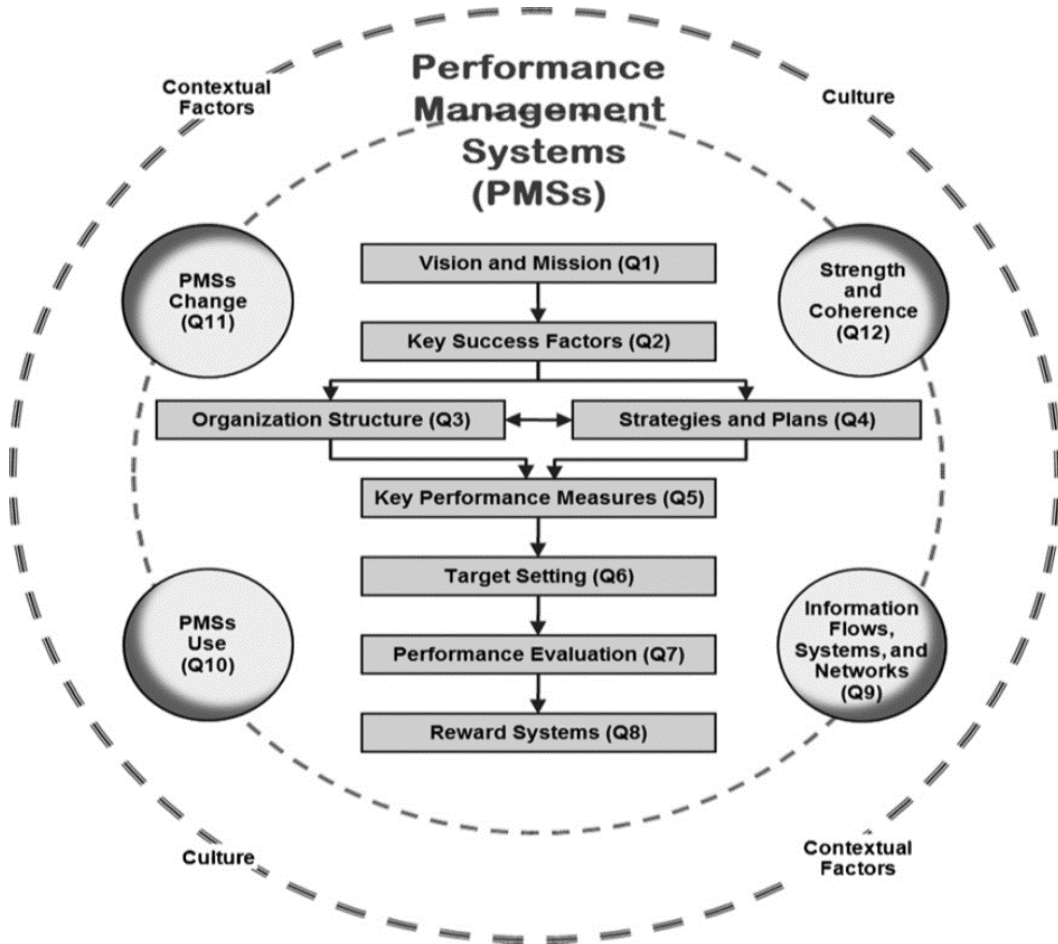
Otley (1999) poses his conclusions from this analysis in terms of five 'issues' or 'questions' that need to answer by any organisation in relation to the design and nature of its PMS. This is extended in Ferreira and Otley (2005, 2009) to 12 questions – 8 of which relate to PMS design and the other 4 to issues and questions related to what they refer to as the underlying 'culture and context' which are seen to influence the nature of the PMS in any organisation.

GKB was a medium-sized, family-controlled, ophthalmic company that employed over 250 (approximately) people. The company was a capital-intensive operating unit that operated in the ophthalmic lenses business. They produce three kinds of lenses namely spherical, toric and plastic lenses.

The business strategy involved achieving leadership in costs and revenues, technology, product development, market development, and human resources, reducing capital employed, and modernizing the business in terms of technology, quality, industrial processes, administrative processes, and commercial processes. GKB control system and performance management was clear focus on strategies and plans were brought into life of GKB to spend their managerial time on and to apply their skills, and thus contribute to a successful implementation of corporate strategy.

The performance measures monitored by the company echoed the variety of objectives GKB pursued. The company monitored regularly its performance in the traditional areas (e.g. production and sales), but also in the spheres of quality and eco-efficiency. So the focus was much broader than that of conventional performance measurement systems.

The management accounting information system was well developed at GKB. Information was disclosed online and as a paper report to allow customisability in the use of information in each department (HRM, marketing, Sales, operational). The feedback information flows across different managerial levels, across the organisation. There were a number of reports that aimed to continuously monitor the company's and its managers' performance against plans. In parallel, the more subtle feed forward information flows, whose aim was to update plans and provide strategic feedback, were also identified. These features were all discussed in managers' conducted once every week and in monthly review meetings, aimed at improving decision-taking and planning accuracy.



Source from Ferreira, A., & Otley, D. (2005, 2009)

Case Methodology

The PM model used as a research tool for the purpose of data from the field. A framework for managing Organization performance and performance management that are represented as a set of questions (vision and mission, key factors, organization structure, strategies and plans, key performance measures, Target, evaluating, rewards, information flows, PMSs use, PMSs change, Strength and coherence) mentioned above (Ferreira, A., & Otley, D. 2005, 2009) in a PM context.

Other researchers have identified several strengths in Otley's (1999) framework. Stringer (2004), in her review of the management accounting articles published in *Management Accounting Research*, and *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, found the framework general and helpful in her analysis. It adds to the limited body of research using case study methodology for organizational control systems. The framework was regarded as robust in capturing various aspects of control systems in organisations and may provide support to other approaches such as culture (Stringer, 2004).

The case study method was used in this field study. Yin defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (1994, p.13).

For this research, data were collected by means of semi-structured questionnaires, reading internal documents and making observations. Separate face-to-face interviews with the people who were in charge of the management of the company were carried out from March to July 2014. Interviews lasted for approximately 1½ hours each and were recorded for further reference. Report was produced from the analysis of transcribed recordings and the notes taken by the interviewers.

Triangulation of the information was achieved by interviewing individuals at different levels of the organisation. Further triangulation was achieved by observing meetings and studying internal company documents. The use of this research method is common in the management accounting literature, which is a widely accepted method.

It is also said that the case studies fulfil also a descriptive role (Yin, 1993), particularly when they draw on (Ferreira, A., & Otley, D. (2005, 2009) frameworks to a mass and describe the evidence collected.

Testing the Framework

Senior executives of the firm, including the Chief executive officer, Head of Human Resources department, Head of Operations, Head of Marketing, etc are interviewed in-depth, using the Ferreira, A., & Otley, D. (2005, 2009) as the backdrop. These interviews aimed at capturing the process of performance management and management control systems, as in operation on date. The case study was developed with inputs from these executives in GKB and on archival and other data collected from this organization. These questions (12 questions) were used in the interviews with senior executives and have found all key factors from framework below.

Question No.	Dimension	Testing the Framework
1	Vision and mission	<p>1. To be a worldwide company in ophthalmic lenses, with a leading position in the Indian market.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <p>1. Quality: Our primary focus is on quality. We need to ensure the lenses going out of our premises are the best quality that can be available to our customers.</p> <p>2. Customers: We do well only when our customers do well. Our customers have to be totally satisfied with our service and quality. All our efforts need to be directed to build a healthy relationship with our customers.</p> <p>1. Brand building: We have to build public image, trust and pride to secure the competitive edge, thereby increasing overall market share.</p>
2	Key success factors	<p>1. To dominate the industrial and commercial 'know how'.</p> <p>2. To achieve high productivity levels.</p> <p>3. To foster the evolution of the group's information systems and its relationship with customers and suppliers.</p> <p>4. To control the logistics of the business.</p> <p>5. Technology up gradation (Raw materials, machines etc)</p> <p>6. To offer quality (ISO standard), innovation (mastermind idea) and differentiation.</p> <p>7. To dominate the markets either alone or through strategic alliances.</p> <p>8. Continuous effective R& D system.</p>
3	Organization structure	<p>1. Moving towards highly centralised structure.</p> <p>2. Family-controlled business with a mix of family managers and external managers.</p> <p>3. Management teams encouraged to run the businesses autonomously from other group companies.</p> <p>4. Good organization culture</p>
4	Strategies and Plans	<p>9. Pursuing a cost leadership type of strategy at low cost.</p> <p>10. General strategic orientation defined at the group level.</p> <p>11. A business plan ensued the strategic process.</p> <p>5. Autonomy given to company's top managers in establishing means-end relationships.</p> <p>6. Management by objective</p> <p>7. Cost advantage</p> <p>8. Innovation, quality</p> <p>9. Integrated with customer</p>
5	Key performance measures	<p>10. Performance measures monitored by a top management and executive management.</p> <p>11. Information largely dominated by operational matters.</p> <p>12. Weekly and Monthly feedback on a range of information including budget variances.</p> <p>13. Little evidence of feed-forward information flows.</p> <p>14. KPMS mainly focused on financial and operational performance measures.</p> <p>15. Customer satisfaction (market)</p>
6	Target	<p>16. Targets generally set on the basis on market conditions (demand) and they have certain no of customer.</p> <p>17. reliance on a small number of customers, and operating in</p>

		limited markets
7	Performance evaluating	18. A formalised and institutionalised process driven by human resources guidelines. 19. Performance evaluations used to determine training needs and to set performance targets at operational levels.
8	Rewards	20. Use of financial incentives to reward managerial performance. 21. Managerial discretion could and was used within certain limits in awarding incentives to subordinates. 22. All managers were eligible to incentives.
9	Information flows	23. Control system built to address the needs of managers at different levels, but with clear restrictions with regards to information access privileges, which were dependent upon hierarchical positions. 24. Use of a sophisticated intranet IT application to disseminate information throughout the organization. 25. Development of well –defined and customized software to facilitate professionalised systems of working. 26. Short-term feedback information on plan and budget variances provided. 27. Information largely dominated by operational matters. 28. Some feed-forward information could be observed at the level of meetings.
10	PMSs use	29. Interactive management control systems are those that managers use to involve themselves regularly and personally in the decisions made by subordinates and to focus organizational attention on key strategic issues.
11	PMSs change	30. Introduction of KPIs hierarchies under way as means of creating a culture of “performance”
12	Strength and coherence	31. Connect between performance evaluation and performance rewards. 32. High and moderate level of interactive use of PMSs and of feed-forward controls may have detracted from strategic success. 33. Performance management system appeared to be reasonably well conceived. 34. Following the order of the areas in the framework, the coherence of the PMS was reflected by the fact that the three key success factor mentioned by the managers interviewed were clearly in line with the vision and mission defined by top management. 35. The performance evaluation was based on a combination of financial measures (budget variances and key performance measures). 36. The meetings were a fundamental connexion that held the entire system together and the tool top management used to interactively involve themselves, on a regular and personal basis, in the decisions of subordinates, they focus the attention of managers, and comply with the mentioned need for information flow and flexibility.

Discussion of PMS in GKB in the Context of Existent Literature

After an in-depth analysis of the case, we have noticed a few differences from research findings in existing literature.

It attempts to provide a brief view of the key aspects of case study to establish the research objectives of this study.

From the above discussion, it can be seen that the 12 areas of the performance management and control system identified by Ferreira and Otley (2009), framework were all addressed by the performance management and control system in GKB Ophthalmic Limited. It has been found that:

1. Objectives were clearly connected with strategies and plans.
2. Performance targets were established having in consideration the objectives as well as the strategies adopted.
3. Rewards are derived from a performance evaluation process and are linked to financial incentives. They are also linked to the delivered performance and successful implementation of strategy and plans.
4. A range of feedback and feed forward information flows are tied together, in the different components of the control systems.
5. The organisation's IT systems are well established and used to maintain its relationship with customers and suppliers.
6. The organisation uses a sophisticated intranet IT application to disseminate information throughout the organization.
7. Formalised and institutionalised processes are documented for different functions, to ensure control.
8. KPMs (key performance measure) mainly focused on financial and operational performance measures.
9. The organisation pursues a cost leadership type of strategy.

From the above, we can deduce that performance management system is well established in GKB Ophthalmic Limited.

However, literature says that

The literature provides limited examples of in-depth case-study based empirical research on performance management practice in the context of SMEs. Some authors made use of surveys (Wiesner et al. 2007; Cocca and Alberti, 2008), while others conducted single (Vichitdhanabadee et al., 2009) or few case studies (Hudson et al., 2001; Price and Erwee, 2006; Garengo and Bititci, 2007; Sharma and Bhagwat, 2007) and concluded that systematic performance management system

does not exist in SMEs. Other researchers (Cocca and Alberti, 2010; Ates et al., 2013) argued that in small or medium sized enterprises PMS are often not based on best practices. The absence of strategic performance measures in small businesses, due to their lack of formulated strategy, has been shown by different researchers (Brem et al., 2008; Garengo and Biazzo, 2012).

In India, Sharma, M. K., & Bhagwat, R. (2007) said that Performance management & Measurement System (PMS) is underdeveloped and under researched in Small and Medium Enterprises in India, where as it has emerged as a vital decision support tool at the strategic management level in SMEs in the developing nations. In India, there are limited examples of in-depth case-studies/ empirical research on performance management practice in the context of SMEs.

In our case study, we found that performance management system is well developed in GKB Ophthalmic Ltd., a medium sized manufacturing organisation located in Goa, India. Due to the many recent changes in globalized competitive market, there is every possibility that even SMEs in India may be adopting PMS based on best practices, and recognise the importance of PMS in improving organisational performance.

Also, some authors (Ates, A., Garengo, P., Cocca, P., & Bititci, U. 2013, Aloulou and Fayolle, 2005) found Flexibility and responsiveness, opportunity creation and risk taking are common characteristics of SMEs, and opined that SMEs operate on processes that are not very structured or –engineered”. In our Case study, we have found that GKB has a well-defined organisation structure, with formal flow of Authority and responsibility identified across different levels in the structure. As the PMS are mostly linked to the performance of the person, it is logical to presume that a better performance could lead to an increased hierarchical position. Better the organised structure better the impact on the working of the individuals with regards to performance. We can thus deduce that better performance management system could lead to better individual performance (of all employees), which would lead to better organisational performance. GKB has a centralised organisational structure and it is mostly performance driven as it is a family owned business, but with a mix of family and external executives having a authority of taking decisions and changing strategies for the betterment of the employees and with regards to PMS. It has been noticed in GKB that PMS had a greater impact on the working of the individual and on organisational performance.

In large companies, it is a common practice to design and implement formalised processes to manage operational and managerial activities, whereas SMEs adopt less structured systems and processes when decision making and managing the whole business (Ates, A., Garengo, P., Cocca, P., & Bititci, U. 2013) but it has been found that GKB is trying to manage their resources and implementing with formalized strategy, similar to large industries.

Ates, A., Garengo, P., Cocca, P., & Bititci, U. (2013) also found that SMEs have difficulty in managing the internal and external communication processes, and so, they develop their own managerial practices but do not communicate with their employees. They stated that SMEs develop their performance practices without communicating with employees, customers and suppliers. In our research, in this study have found that GKB has a fixed number of customers and clients, they develop their practices to managing both communication process and they are also trying to match their strategy and practices compared with large organisations in the industry. We have noticed that

GKB is particularly taking steps for critical change to develop own performance management process.

(Gallego et al., 2012) observed that given present-day financial market controls and limited growth in demand, SME firms are focusing increasingly on how to utilise existing resources more efficiently and effectively. Previous research argued that small and medium-sized firms have fewer options than their larger counterparts to improve performance. However, one resource that is common to all organisations, which has been the focus of increasing theoretical, empirical and practical attention in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), is that of human resources. Scholars have suggested that adopting specific human resource management (HRM) practices can improve small firm performance and sustain competitiveness (Patel and Cardon, 2010; Razouk, 2011; Williamson et al., 2002). GKB has a clearly defined vision and objectives, and is implementing many of the managerial practices, once considered to be used only by larger organisations.

Sheehan, M. (2013) argued that among practitioners there is also recognition somewhat commonly held view of the past, that smaller and medium firms do not need human resource and/or the view that human resource practices are informal. This case study found that the reverse is true and that Human resource management system is working well, even in an SME.

Conclusion

A review of literature in the area of performance management in small and medium enterprises shows that the existence and non-existence of performance management system in SMEs and we argued the SMEs is adopting practice of performance management to enhance organizational performance.

Previously, a limited number of studies have found a positive relationship between a greater number of human resource practices and SME performance in both a cross-sectional context (Michie and Sheehan, 2008; Nguyen and Bryant, 2004; Verreynne et al., 2011). Performance management system is the part of Human resource practices.

As this case suggested that the existing literature on PMS in SME may not still be valid, the researcher aims to now expand the scope of this research and do an empirical study on a sample of SMEs in Goa across different manufacturing organisations, and see whether this is the emerging trend or GKB is a one-off case.

The findings of the case study can be summarized in few points - the mission and vision of the organization, together with the values of GKB, were clearly communicated and are known by managers at all levels. These long term purposes were discussed and reinforced through regular and frequent meetings among managers and with the rest of the staff.

Secondly, the evidence suggests an explicit development of causal relationship among performance measures. Finally, the study found a strong interactive use of information flows. Information generated by the PMS was an important and recurring item on the agenda of meetings addressed by the highest management levels, with pervasiveness of face-to-face challenges and debate.

It is the main contribution to demonstrate how the strength and coherence of the links between the components of the performance management system of GKB were able to create the ex-ante conditions to achieve organizational objectives.

In GKB that was accomplished by (a) being able to transmit mission, vision and the values of GKB to the whole organization through the use of meetings as an interactive tool; (b) using performance measures to focus managers' attention on key success factors; (c) basing employee performance appraisal on key success factor and using it to reinforce the values of GKB (d) aligning rewards system to that employee appraisal; and finally, in the Mastermind environment where GKB's managers make decisions, (e) interactive use of meetings was found more suitable than strictly following plans or budgets.

Finally, the method chosen limited the general applicability of the findings; additional in-depth case studies would be required to assess whether the insights provided by this study have normative implications. Through an in-depth analysis of the PMS, this article has sought to stimulate and encourage further interest and debate among other researchers regarding PMSs.

Teaching Notes

This case has been written to understand the existence of performance management system in small and medium manufacturing enterprises in India. It can be used as an example of "ease writing exercise" for qualitative researchers. Also it serves as an example of applying an existing model for research and testing its validity. Hence, the case can be used as a tool in class room teaching for courses like Business Research Methods, Comprehensive case Writing, Human Resource Management, Performance Management, etc.

When used in teaching Business Research Methods or Case Writing, the focus of instructor needs to be on the methodology adopted. The importance of literature review can be highlighted and its role in identifying a suitable model can be discussed. Also the importance of quoting other researchers and their earlier contribution to the area under study can be explained. The students can be asked to identify any lacunae in the presentation of the case (for example, flow of thought, application of theory to the case situation, etc.) and the students may be advised to rewrite for better presentation. Also, the relevance of information obtained from the organisation and any missing data can be identified by students, and the instructor may ask the students what they would like to do differently to make the case more comprehensive.

When the case is used to teach performance management (an optional course) instructor focus should be on asking students to analyse the performance management model discussed in the case vis-à-vis other available models for managing organisation performance that may be presented in their text books for reference. The differences in application of these models for manufacturing organisations versus organisations in the service sector can be discussed in detail. The relationship between individual and organisation performance can be discussed and the contribution of each of the 12 points discussed in the model to individual performance may be highlighted. For example, the role of organisation vision and mission and their translation into organisational goals that can further be aligned with individual goals can be discussed in detail. Also student can be made to discuss the role of external or macro factors in influencing organisational performance.

When used in the Human Resource Management (a core course) in Business Management, this case can be used to highlight the role of performance management as a core human resource function. The actual people who are responsible for designing and implementing comprehensive performance management system can be discussed. Also the students can be made to understand the strategic role of performance management system in designing other organisational systems. The interdependence between the different departments, both in the design and implementation of such organisation-wide systems can be discussed.

The instructors are advised to frame appropriate questions for discussion in a particular area, for optimum learning benefit of the students.

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