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L5M1

Managing Teams and Individuals

Questions & Answers PDF

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Question: 1

Explain 5 different metaphors that can be used to describe an organisation (20 points)

How confident do you feel answering this question? 1- Not confident at all 2- I don't know the topic well
- I could write a couple of sentences 3- I'm okay with this topic - I could write a couple of paragraphs 4-
I'd be happy with this question, but I'm not an expert 5- Extremely confident- I know a lot about this
topic

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

Answer: C,D,E

Explanation:

A basic response would:

- Explain what a metaphor is
- Give 5 metaphors from the following list:
 - 1) Machine = a system to be managed (most common metaphor)
 - 2) Organism = organic, living, biological being
 - 3) Brain = intelligent and able to learn
 - 4) Culture = has an identity shaped by ritual and symbolism
 - 5) Political System = diversity of conflicts / power (stakeholder theories)
 - 6) Psychic Prison = individuals are repressed / controlled / trapped
 - 7) Flux and Transformation = autopoiesis – self renews, order comes from chaos
 - 8) Instrument of Domination = exploitative and powerful

These can be in any order. You may also include other metaphors- these are just the ones covered in the study guide p.10-11

A good response would

- Include a short paragraph on each of the chosen metaphors detailing: the metaphor, an explanation of what this means and an example. You can clearly separate your paragraphs with a subtitle naming the metaphor to make it easy for the examiner to read. For example:

1) The Machine

An organisation can be described as a machine in that it is a closed mechanical system where each individual employed within the organisation plays a part. The organisation may not be able to function properly without these different parts, the same way a machine may not function correctly if it is missing components. For example, a manufacturing organisation may view itself as a 'machine' in that each member of the team within the factory completes a small and different part of a process to create a product. In this metaphor, staff are viewed as components or parts, signalling that they are perhaps easily replaceable.

2) The Organism

An organisation may view itself as an organism if it sees itself as an open system which is constantly growing and evolving. The organisation is viewed as a living entity and is described in biological terms. An example of this may be a start-up company which needs to survive in the marketplace. Describing a company as an organism signals that companies can live and die and that survival and self-preservation is the priority.

3) The Brain

The brain metaphor describes an organisation as something that has the ability to learn, remember, understand and adapt. This metaphor is useful for organisations which are evolving, for example, changing their processes to become more environmentally aware. The brain metaphor indicates that an organisation is an intelligent being, capable of making decisions.

4) The Culture

An organisation can be described as a culture in that each organisation has different rules, rituals and practices. They may have their own language (e.g. the use of acronyms), and their own symbols (e.g. colour scheme, office design). Describing an organisation as a culture distinguishes the organisation from others as no two would be the same. This metaphor may be used by a company who wishes to separate itself from its competitors by showing it is different.

5) The Psychic Prison

This description of an organisation examines the psychological aspect of the work environment, through the use of the psychological contract. Its employees feel trapped within the organisation, as if they were trapped in a prison – i.e. they cannot escape and they have limited freedom. An organisation that is described as a psychic prison would repress and control the staff, not through physical means, but psychological ones, for example in the way staff are spoken to and how staff are made to feel.

An excellent response may also include

- Who would likely use the metaphor? E.g. an unhappy employee may be more inclined to describe their organisation as a 'psychic prison' but a happy employee may describe the same organisation as a brain. Companies which favour a human relations theory to management may describe the organisation as an organism.

Question: 2

What is a 'psychological contract'? (5 points). Discuss the factors that can influence this and how an employer can protect the psychological contract from being broken (15 points)

How confident do you feel answering this question? 1- Not confident at all 2- I don't know the topic well - I could write a couple of sentences 3- I'm okay with this topic - I could write a couple of paragraphs 4- I'd be happy with this question, but I'm not an expert 5- Extremely confident- I know a lot about this topic

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

Answer: C,D,E

Explanation:

A Basic Response would:

- Give a brief description of the term 'psychological contract'
- Describe at least 2 factors that can influence the psychological contract
- Describe at least 1 way an employer can protect the contract from being broken

A good response may include:

- The psychological contract is intangible- it's the unwritten agreement between an employee and their employer that describes the informal commitments, expectations and understandings that make up their relationship
- Different to the written / formal Contract of Employment. Outlines common expectations that aren't in the legal employment contract such as- for employee: job security, career progression, development opportunities, fair pay and benefits, expected support. For manager: timeliness, clothing, cleanliness, respect, attitude
- It is built on the actions of both parties (manager and employee) and sets out how people behave (e.g. whether turning up late is acceptable or not)
- Often imprecise and rarely spoken – its inferred so actions are hard to prosecute
- Factors which can influence the psychological contract include; experience in previous employment, recruitment process, 121s, other managers / teams within organisation, public statements made by the company
- Protect the psychological contract via- employer brand, communication, learning and career development, management style, managing expectations, measuring employee attitude

An excellent response may include:

- Examples, either from real life or a scenario which highlight the point you have made in your essay. For example if you are saying the recruitment process can influence the psychological contract you could mention: "The recruitment process is often the first interaction between a manager and a new employee and this is often the foundation of the psychological contract. For example, in an interview a manager may say that it is expected that people employed within this role progress to the next more senior level within 2 years. This leads the employee to believe they can expect a promotion within 2 years. If this turns out not to be the case, the psychological contract may be perceived to have been broken."

Remember you only have 35 minutes maximum to write your response, and the question is composed of 3 parts. Make sure you've answered all 3 parts of the question. Because of the time-limit you will probably only have time to explain 2-3 factors and 2-3 protections in your response.

Question: 3

What is meant by the 'systems approach' and 'contingency approach' to management? (20 points)

How confident do you feel answering this question? 1- Not confident at all 2- I don't know the topic well

- I could write a couple of sentences 3- I'm okay with this topic - I could write a couple of paragraphs 4- I'd be happy with this question, but I'm not an expert 5- Extremely confident- I know a lot about this topic

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

Answer: C,D,E

Explanation:

A Basic Response would:

- Give a description of 'systems approach' = views the organisation as an open system made up of interrelated and inter-dependent parts that interact as sub-systems.
- Give a description of 'contingency approach' = also known as the situational approach, this theory says there is no single, textbook rule for the best way to manage an organisation- everything depends on the situation/ contingency.

A good response may include the following details:

Systems Approach

- The organisation is a complex unit made of interrelated parts – you can't separate the different parts; the system is composed of inter-related subsystems that make up the one larger system.
- The systems approach implies that decisions and actions in one business function will affect other areas. For example, if the purchasing department does not acquire the right quantity and quality of components, the production department won't be able to do its job. There is therefore a high emphasis placed on teamwork and communication
- Managers can take a systems approach to management when they: take a holistic view of the organisation, use cross-functional teams, gain different viewpoints, encourage collaboration and networking.
- Synergies are created when different departments work together
- It may be difficult to apply a systems approach to management within a large and complex organisation. More suited to smaller organisations where cross-functional working can be implemented successfully and there is high levels of interaction between departments.

Contingency Approach

- The theory is that the best approach to organisational management depends on the situation. There are different variables (contingencies) to consider and this influences the best way of managing people.
- Managers who use the contingency approach are flexible when choosing strategies and adapting to new demands. They have no 'rule book'. They may make different rules for different employees or depending on other circumstances. The advantage of this is that it is very flexible, the disadvantage is that employees may be treated differently and there is little consistency. May also be more time-consuming for a Manager
- According to this theory the OOR – Organisation Operating Reality - is fast-moving and changeable – has 4 elements: Connection, Interconnection, Dependence, Interdependence

An excellent response may also mention

Similarities and differences between the theories.

- Similarities - both are modern approaches to management theory and both are non-prescriptive (they don't tell a manager how to manage). Both also counteract scientific management / bureaucratic approaches to management
- Difference – systems approach takes a holistic view of the organisation whereas contingency looks always at the individual circumstances.
- Examples of the approaches in practice.

Question: 4

Describe the key principles of the Taylorism school of thought on Management (20 points)
How confident do you feel answering this question? 1- Not confident at all 2- I don't know the topic well
- I could write a couple of sentences 3- I'm okay with this topic - I could write a couple of paragraphs 4- I'd be happy with this question, but I'm not an expert 5- Extremely confident- I know a lot about this topic

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

Answer: C,D,E

Explanation:

A basic response would give the following details:

- Founded by Henry Taylor in the early 20th century
- Key principles are:
 - o Creating an efficient work structure is a scientific endeavour
 - o Recruitment and training are a scientific process.
 - o Work must be carried out in a prescribed way (there's only one correct way to work and that's the most efficient way) – the focus is on the quantity of output- more is better
 - o There should be increased salaries for improved levels of output.
 - o Workers are motivated by higher salaries

A good response may also include:

- Taylorism is a rational-economic approach to motivating individuals, meaning money is the only motivation
- Background = industrialisation and attempting to increase productivity. There is only one 'right way' to perform a job and that is to improve efficiency and productivity
- It sees humans as resources and the organisation as a machine
- At the time Taylor's ideas were considered radical – worker motivation was not a known factor in management.
- Practices which have their route in Taylorism include performance related pay/ commission, systemic planning and waste elimination (Lean) and Management by Exception.
- Henry Fayol's 14 Principles of Scientific Management (1930); order, discipline, unity of command (everyone has dedicated line manager), stability of personnel (keep employees), esprit de corps (close teamworking). He was a French industrialist – Universal Management in Manufacturing

An excellent response may also include:

- Taylorism in practice - Bethlehem Steel Corporation – Taylor's method improved output by 60% but management wasn't happy as it had the potential for mass redundancy. Management disagreed that workers were machines and noted workers feeling disempowered.
- Today Taylorism and Scientific Management is highly criticised because:
 - o Reward-motivation – not everyone is motivated by money, and increased salaries don't always lead to increased outputs
 - o Humans don't respond uniformly to inputs (it's not a science)
- A modern example of Taylorism is McDonalds – this is an excellent video for further study: Frederick Taylor | Scientific Management Explained – YouTube

Question: 5

Explain what a 'bureaucratic' management style is (10 points). What are the advantages and disadvantages of this? (10 points)

How confident do you feel answering this question? 1- Not confident at all 2- I don't know the topic well - I could write a couple of sentences 3- I'm okay with this topic - I could write a couple of paragraphs 4- I'd be happy with this question, but I'm not an expert 5- Extremely confident- I know a lot about this topic

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

Answer: C,D,E

Explanation:

A basic response would include:

- A brief explanation of Bureaucracy including some of the 6 characteristics listed below
 - o Hierarchical Management Structure
 - o Specialisation – rigid division of labour
 - o System of Rules e.g. Formal Written Communication
 - o Impersonality
 - o Rationality – individual span of control/ job descriptions
 - o Uniformity - rules apply equally to everyone
 - o Technical Ability - promotion based on education and training so this removes favouritism
 - o Stability
- 1-2 advantages (from list below)
- 1-2 disadvantages (from list below)

A good response may include:

- Context (could be your introduction paragraph) – became popular in the 1970s – computation is in its infancy, international business is done via informal networks, lots of distrust of politics, equal rights and women's rights becoming mainstream, neo-liberal policies. All of this means companies are getting bigger and there's a demand for fair, rational and logical organisational structures.
- Bureaucracy is an organisational structure characterised by rules, standardised processes, meticulous division of labour and clear hierarchies.
- Often attributed to Weber 1976
- Today the word has a negative connotation but it's important to think of bureaucracy as a business structure without these connotations.
- Advantages: easy to implement, everyone knows their role and place, people are in roles and don't go outside of those roles- plays to strengths of individuals, written rules mean little confusion and room for interpretation

- Disadvantages: inflexible, unresponsive, excessive paperwork, too many layers of hierarchy, inefficient, siloed working, doesn't consider the human need for personal relationships and empowerment, not suitable for customer facing roles

You don't have to include ALL of those mentioned above. It would be better to select 3 of each and explain these fully, giving an example E.g. a Law firm may have written SOP (standard operating procedures) for how letters are written – the advantage of this is that it ensures work is accurate and each person produces the same quality of work. The disadvantage is that there is no room for creativity and improving the process. It may demotivate the team if they have to do things the same way every day as this can get boring and repetitive.

An excellent response may also include

- Bureaucracy isn't a new thing in the 70s – Karl Marx called it 'an appalling parasite body' in 1834.

- Weber didn't invent bureaucracy but researched it and theorised it was a necessary administration system to deal with the complexities of the modern business. He claimed it had 'technical superiority' over other structures.

- The disadvantages mentioned above could be considered criticism of a poorly designed bureaucratic system. Some industries such as oil and gas need bureaucracy to ensure there are controls and safety. Industries such as these demonstrate that bureaucracy is a workable and appropriate management style.



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