The Process of Integration

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Abstract—Integration is an activity that constructs and orders the factors so that to form a high-effective, harmonious and whole activity. In the social integration, though each activity has its own characters, all these activities have common regulation or logical reason. As to the aspect of management, there has a significant meaning to sum up the regulation and logical reason in order to improve the validity and guide the practice. The process of integration is also called period of integration, which means the whole process from beginning to the end. It has some stages such as possibility, goal-setting, staff-organizing, plan-making, complement and evaluation.

Keywords—integration chance, integration goals, integration plan, Completing and evaluating integration

I . INTRODUCTION

Integration is an activity that constructs and orders the factors so that to form a high-effective, harmonious and whole activity.

In the social integration, though each activity has its own characters, all these activities have common regulation or logical reason. As to the aspect of management, there has a significant meaning to sum up the regulation and logical reason in order to improve the validity and guide the practice. The process of integration is also called period of integration, which means the whole process from beginning to the end. It has some stages such as possibility, goal-setting, staff-organizing, plan-making, complement and evaluation.

IDENTIFYING INTEGRATION CHANCE

The first question to answer is to identify integrative conditions and to seize chances, that is to clarify why we need integration virtually, which is also the starting stage of the integration activity. Today, integration has become a common phenomenon in modern economy society from in all levels of view, such as the micro-view of resource, product, function, process, and information from individual to organization; the middle-view of enterprise union, industrial clusters, campus town, and urban agglomeration; the macro-view of political, economic, and military areas and countries. There always exists a drive behind integrative phenomenon, which is called integrative drive or motive force. The internal and external motive force arouses the integration phenomenon or activity. But we cannot identify or find the opportunities of promoting integration necessarily. We need to seek, to find out these opportunities, especially when these opportunities are invisible or the potential benefits cannot be easily found, in order to make the task of identifying and seeking opportunities more meaningful.

Differentiation of elements arouses many problems, and this is the motive force of integration, which is also the result of contradictory movement between elements, between parts and whole, between whole and environment. However, the reasons of some specific problems and items are quite specific and complex, which brings difficulties into the task. In management practice, the motive force can be classified in two kinds: the inner reason and the outer reason. The inner reason is the need of optimizing elements’ structure in organization. The outer reason is the need of adapting environment for organization. Both of the inner and outer reasons are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inner Reasons</th>
<th>Outer Reasons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>① Seeking leap-forward development.</td>
<td>① Fast development of science and technology call for change the</td>
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<td>② Seeking low-cost expansion.</td>
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<td>③ Lacking resources lead to the limitation in getting resources.</td>
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<td>④ Irrational stored resource or unshared resource lead to the waste of use.</td>
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<td>⑤ Narrow sections bring obvious conflicts, difficulties in co-operation, high-cost, and also counteract the benefits of division. It needs to reorganize.</td>
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<td>⑥ Multi-level, complex procedure, low reaction of information, and the failure of order system hinder the development of product.</td>
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management model and the integration of organization and provide technical methods for integration.
② Fierce market competition requires organization to integrate.
③ Outer transaction costs are too high by the limits of market.
④ Unbalanced development leads to the severe polarization.
⑤ Seeking marginal innovation. That is to integrate inner and outer resource advantages so that to innovate the new advantage.
⑥ Because of the difficulties and complexities, single force or measure cannot function well.

III. SETTING INTEGRATION GOALS

Integrative activities are caused by inner and outer reasons. We should clarify these reasons before the integrative activity. Otherwise the whole activities would have no direction. The process of clarifying reasons establishes the goal model of integrative state, which is also an obstacle. So we need to make preparation for integration, such as gathering information and resources, using statistic data, analyzing, processing and creating. Besides, we need experts’ analysis and study on the current situation, characteristics and operational mechanism of the organizational system. We also need their qualitative judgment on the possible direction, potential problems and their suggestions to form empirical hypothesis, find out variables of state, environment, control and output, and form modeling system.

We should set the integrative goals practically in order to avoid the “perfect” and the “all-inclusive”. Matters should develop within a certain extent. It can be reflected from the fact of theoretical study and integrative practice that the real successful integration is the “fitted” one rather than the one of integrating every aspect perfectly. Theoretically, there exists a “reasonable border”. We should analyze the integrative forces of the system to assure the border in the process of setting goals. Inside each integrative entity, there exists a “matrix”, which releases power--integrative forces gathering and governing relative factors, and forming an organic whole. As the base of integrative entity, integrative forces can set the objective border of integration. That is to say, it can be the integrative object only on the circumstance of internal force (integrative force) is stronger than external force (environment force to the factors). To the integration of certain system, the object can be chosen widely. From the view of characteristics of integrative object, there’s no need to integrate all factor into the system. The concept of “the larger the better” adapted to integration. Integration needs these factors to form a complementary structure. From this point, only these factors that could help promoting integrative forces of system are the fitted ones. Putting some of these factors into integration while neglecting characteristics and regulations of objects, neglecting the influence of integrative forces, these factors will finally be spitted from the system. And this is the important reason for the failure of most integration.

IV. THE ORGANIZING INTEGRATION STAFF

As a systematic and comprehensive engineering, integration cannot be accomplished easily. It is an activity with the involvement of many subjects, based on the coordination of multi-subjects. The subjects are not only leaders of integration (or manager of integration), but also operators for specific integrative items. To form an integrative team, it is necessary to organize government, enterprise and group (a crowd of people). Only through the organizational arrangement, could a person transform into the integrative subject. Organizing integration staff is the reflection of management specialization on integrative function. From organizing to working effectively, integration needs managers’ carefully arrangement and their outstanding management.

In the process of organizing and managing integration staff, there are some key points we need to follow:

First, integration staff should be in their own places rapidly. Each integrative item needs to start immediately after setting integration goals; otherwise we would lose the best time of integration. The specific tasks have to be dealt with by staff, or the following tasks could not be proceeded smoothly.

Second, integrative team should be formed in a reasonable structure, because of the complexity of integrative task. Staff’s age, major, experience, working ability of are also limitations to certain tasks for them to deal with. Integration staff, especially the integration manager should be chosen from those excellent people of the organization. This is because they have a deep understanding of the organization and integrative motive, could make the “right” decision, and promote the whole integration more efficiently by their personal authority of in organization.

Third, integration staff should be trusted, and should be given more power in making decision. As the saying goes “trust your comrades at work”. In the meeting of beginning integration, it should be proclaimed firstly that working staff has the power of distributing and arranging cross-sections. And in other meetings during integrating process, the staff is the spokesmen of supervisors in organization.

Forth, integration staff should be given necessary support and be controlled at the right moment. Department manager should not only support the plan of integrative team, but also bolster the integration staff, so that to break the barriers in integration.

Fifth, another task for managers is to evaluate the staff’s working seriously and substantively. Linking results
with profits can motivate staff to pay much attention to their
tasks.

VI. DESIGNING INTEGRATION PLAN

Preparedness ensures success while unpreparedness spells failure. As it tells us, we should make a plan can before start working. Plan could guide the development to the scheduled goal of the task, so that to accomplished the tasks. Setting integrative goal can only explain the intended effect of integration or the initial idea of the integration activity. To achieve integrative goals, we also need to further the decentralization and specification of goals, and form the layout plan practically. All these work provides regulations to the integration, and puts forward integrative task. There are various ways in achieving these goals while there are various integration plans. We should choose the fitted one as our final plan among all these plans after accounting and analyzing the costs. And what is the fitted plan? It should be in accordance with the following criteria.

1. Basis on the situation with operability. The integrative plan is the guidance to the whole task of integration; it is not just a talk. It is said that the purpose of integration is to find out the best solution of the system. That is to optimize the factors’ distribution, to reach the best operating effect, so that to make the whole system function well. Theoretically, the best plan is the one that can optimize the system. But it cannot be realized in practice, and optimization is only the beginning and end in dealing with problems of the system. The criteria of optimization are quite different according to people’s different understandings. Besides, all information and resources should be gathered and be drawn so that to optimize the system. And this work could not be done in a short time. Moreover, each system could be changed in its development. As time goes by, the characteristic of state has been changed. And the formally optimized solution should not be the “best” any longer. As to the integrative problems, it needs to choose the fitted or the satisfied solution.1” Practically performed, easily operated” is the primary criterion to justify the integration plan.

2. Future-orientation with prospectiveness. Integration is a need to solve the current problems, and also a need for organization to develop sustainably. Integration plan is to design the integrative activity, which is also a forward-looking one. Although we have already analyzed information and resources systematically, changes of environment brings changes in integrative process, such as designing, applying, and implementing the process of integration. It cannot guide the integrative practice effectively if it cannot predict these possible changes correctly. And the implementation of integration plan will influence other staff and task. What is the influence? What is the extent of the influence? How to eliminate it? All these questions need subjects’ prospectiveness in integration plan.

3. Involving extensively showing groupness. The expansion of organization and the complexity of environment contribute the increasing factors that could influence integrative activity. They also lead to the emergence of different phenomena. Therefore, in designing integration plan, there are more and more data or information to deal with; there are more and more problems to consider. And these tasks cannot be completed individually that they require more staff taking part in designing. The team’s intelligence and power could shun individual’s limitations; just as the proverb goes “three heads are better than one”. Different views and opinions could further considering tasks and possible problems comprehensively, and will provide the fitted technical way to integration. Absorbing experts’ intelligence can improve the integration plan scientifically, operationally and economically. Beside these factors, the relative stakeholders are various because of the cross-system, cross-section operation. The involvement of staff, on one hand, could compromise benefits of all, and succeed in understanding and getting people’s support on the other. So that eliminates the barriers in implementing integration plan.

4. Effectively and efficiency. Integrative activity of the enterprise aims to achieve the economy goal, which is to influence the product factors to the most extent by allocating them optimally, to maximize profits, and to accomplish effectively for the enterprise. The starting point or the main factor to think about for the integration between government and enterprise is the improvement of social benefits or the whole nation’s efficiency. Besides, it also needs to pay attention to economic benefits in order to enhance the economy and the efficiency in using funds. Whatever factors cause integration, the rooted one is the pursuing of profits or efficiency. Thus, integration plan should concentrate on the efficiency so that to achieve the expect goals at their maximum cost.

V. IMPLEMENTING INTEGRATION PLAN

Integration plan constructs the essential operation stage of integrative activity, which is not an automatic one. In implementation, there still exists many problems to solve though the plan and goals are settled primarily. The existing problems are as such: Whether implementing on the basis of the settled plan? Whether modifying the plan according to the situation? How to speed up the process and reduce costs constantly because of the consumption of people, resource and money, and longer time? How to coordinate new problems and conflicts that are arousing by the implementation? All these problems need the staff’s excellent working ability and creativity.

The process of implementing integration plan is a process of forming integrative system, which is also a process of factors integrating from disintegration to integration, from conflicts to coordination. There are four periods in integrative process: the exploration period, the collision period, the grinding-in period and the creation
period. Conflicts of each period are different. The following chart (Chart 2-3) tells the differences in each period.

![Chart 2-3: conflicts curves of integration](image)

1. The exploration period. Staffs make prediction before implementing integration plan. They also create new situations of the plan, compare and analyze every possibility in evaluating advantages and disadvantages, and draw measures toward the unfavorable results. Measures include talking with staff, expressing integrative wishes, and so on. In this period, there are no distinct conflicts. Both profits and conflicts are potential or invisible.

2. The collision period. This period is the beginning of implementing integration plan. Integrative conflicts and dangers are booming in this period. There are some important reforming measures in this period, such as, establishing organizational structure, changing management, cutting staff’s numbers, beginning larger projects. The integrative conflicts cannot be avoided because of touch or collision among integrative objects. Thus, integrative staff needs to monitor the “block focus”. The so-called “block focus” is a key factor, which could be a big block in the integration process. It could be a person, a profit group, or a system.2 There are two points we need to pay attention to in monitoring “block focus”. The first point is used to control the relationship between integrative speed and the strength of possible conflicts. The second point is used control the conflicts in a limited extent by propaganda, education and communication.

3. The grinding-in period. This is the latter period of integration, which also needs a long time for factors to integrate. In this period, problems are thoroughly exposed. When conflicts reach their maximum extent, they begin to compromise in order to find out the “neutral point” (it is another way that can be accepted by all), and tend to release. Generally factors in this period are in the integrative state. And the task of integration is to maintain modification, which is to operate the system sustainably and effectively.

4. The creation period. Based on the integrative tendency, it is a period of exploration, creation and integration. Compared with the first three periods, the beginning of this period cannot be found easily. This is because the collision process is a creative one that would continue along with the development of organization. Thus, the end of this period cannot be predicted.

Integration is a systematic work. A person is the key factor among those factors that influencing and controlling integrative activity. In any organization, integration can be classified as integration among people, integration between people and matters, and integration among matters as well. Integration would be much easier and simple without men. But unfortunately, people will finally influence and control integration by setting relationship with integrative objects. The subjective initiative of people would promote or impede the implementation of integration. The resistance forces come from influences of individual and group. The individual influences are factors of individual’s custom, safety, economy benefits, and fear for future, and selective information-processing. The group influences are factors of structure inertia, limit concentration on reform, threat to professional knowledge, threat to powers, and threat to resource distribution.3 Thus, the key questions to ensure integration’s success are how to change the negative to the positive, how to change the resistance to motive, and how to overcome the resistance force of people effectively.

VI. COMPLETING AND EVALUATING INTEGRATION

This is the final stage of integration. Evaluation here refers to the summative evaluation, which is to justify the value of integration results. It is an important stage of integration process, because integration is a managing practice with purpose, plan and organization. Through observing integrative result, we can examine whether it achieves the goal, whether it leads to the high operational costs of organization. We can also examine whether the result brings obstacle to the organization and leads to the loss of profits. This process not only accumulates experience of success, but also gathers the problems and reasons that leading to failure. This stage brings a decisive basis to the next integrative process.

As it has referred, integration is not overall combination of factors. Integration needs the subjects’ optimization, choice and match, and the subjects’ combination in a fitted way, thus forming a complementary, matching organism with fitted factors. Two and more than two factors (unit, sub-system) can integrate an organism. This integration should be an organic one but not simply adding. The aim of organizing and constructing according to some regulations is to enhance the organic function (system function) wholly. In this point of view, integrative result seems to be positive all the time. Implementing integration only based on the settled plan, can the result achieve the goal? That is the function of the whole will exceed the total amount of all factors. But integrative result is not always positive, it has success and failure. This is an explanation to the natural and social phenomenon that leads to organic decline. There exist three results in reality. First, 1+1>2, this is the unlinable increase of function or benefits, which is also called merit integration or positive integration. Second, 1+1=2, this is summing up function or benefits simply, which is called linable integration or zero-integration. Third, 1+1<2, this is the loss of function or profits, which is also called non-merit
integration or negative integration. There’s no zero integration in practice. We consider integrative activity as zero integration only for the convenience of research. We need to plan, to organize, to guide, to coordinate and to control the integrative activity in order to avoid the negative effect. Only in this way, integration could become merit integration, can the importance of integrative management be embodied. This is also a basic reason for us to study, to explore, and to establish theory of integrative function, and is the initial motivation studying integration.

VII. CONCLUSION

The period or entire course of integration is a process for factors changing from disintegrating to integrating. This process includes contradictions, conflicts, and dangers. Each stage has its own research value.

First, we should grasp the best time. Integrative motivation is a potential possibility before integrative activity. It needs outer conditions to make these possibilities come true. People need to use their enthusiasm, initiative and the activity to deal with matters such as possibilities, to control the practical considerations, to avoid the disadvantages, and to make better a better development. Just as the proverb goes, “fortune favors those who prepared”. People, who find out chances and seize them in time, can benefit the potential profits of integration, and become winners of integration.

Second, the costs of integrative activity could be reduced by cutting costs of each stage in integrative activity. For example, we can organize the integrative subjects, set the fitted goals, and choose the best plan by costing at a minimum extent. All these should be done under the basis of deep and specific study and comparison. Besides, the analysis of integration process has many advantages, such as, cutting time pause in each stage, saving time, speeding up integration, reducing the uncertainty in implementing integration plan.

Finally, study on integration process could strengthen the operation of integration, especially studies on setting goals, choosing plan, and knowing how to implement integration. If we don’t study integration process, we will never know that there are many stages in integration, and we will never know that there are many specific problems to deal with in every stage, and could not make the right decision in choosing plan, neither. We will understand integration in a simple way. We will not think about how to reduce costs and how to enhance effectively. And thus, we cannot ensure the integration timely nor ensure it developing in an effective way. In fact, people always lose many chances of creating integration, and maintain a low-effective organizational system in a long time though integrative results are far from what we have expected. Study on the process of integration could make us understand integration and change those phenomena above.

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