A Theoretical Framework to Capture Stakeholders’ Perspectives for the Design of Collaborative Communication Structure for Specialized Organization

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Abstract

Small business energy analysts often specialize in one aspect of the energy analysis business. This specialized focus is done by necessity due to scarcity of resources and to maintain a proprietary market niche. However, this specialized focus results in a growth inhibitor due to their lack of ability to address all the potential clients’ needs. Moving to a multiple entity collaborative approach can provide a competitive advantage. Yet, interacting with multiple entities that do not communicate with each other well can be dysfunctional and unsatisfying for themselves and most importantly for clients. When multiple interests and beliefs are in place, soft systems methodology (SSM) can assist leaders to find the “middle” ground for all participants to collaborate. However, SSM is based on the observer doing all the design work, a feature not desirable when designing collaborative structures. In this research, a participative version of Soft Systems Methodology was developed. The resulting version is capable of assisting collaborative specialized organizations leaders in the design of communication structures to coordinate their efforts.

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