**Group 7&8 – Live Stream Coffee Chat**

**The Problem**

The world is connected. Not only has the communication facilitated the cultural exchange, but the economies and financial markets were also benefited from the technological advances and nowadays we can assuredly say that boundaries between countries have come down.

As a result for the corporate environment, companies have built relevant footprint in several nations and all continents, making their products global. Many of these global companies for years have adopted a traditional organizational structure, which basically establishes a central-driven organization: headquarters dictate the vision, principles, communication and all important guidelines and the subsidiaries must strictly follow the instructions. However, there are some important negative consequences that this structure brings to the company.

Not all the subsidiaries can follow the same direction that the headquarter orient to. Despite having global business, the companies should adapt it to local tastes and specific demand. Otherwise, some markets basically would not accept the products and the company would fail in its objectives. Therefore, an organizational structure that prevents the free flow of communication within the company would naturally isolate the division that “looks different”. And this isolation again brings more negative impacts for the company, considering that it would not be possible anymore to share best practices and obtain synergies for the whole group. Therefore, the organization structure plays a key role and a right balance between central/decentralized configurations should be pursued.

In addition to the problems mentioned, another common situation is related to communication. It’s not difficult for companies to have difficulties on transmitting the right message from the top to the bottom of the pyramid. Usually the message is changed or not even delivered.

**The Solution**

Therefore, a company that can provide free and diverse channels of communication would have a competitive advantage in its market. Not only between headquarter and the subsidiaries, but also among the several functions, divisions and departments. Employees would be able to share best practices and discuss similar problems they were facing. A regulatory strategy department from a European subsidiary would be able to share negotiations with their local regulators when the new regulations also are taking place in Latin America, for example.

Therefore, providing the company with simple tools would be key to develop these capabilities. Analyzing the daily basis work from great part of the employees from multinationals, we came with the idea of using a very common place to increase the flow of information between the employees: the coffee area. Everyday thousands/millions of employees meet there to chat; hence we could take advantage of this space and this time to improve the communication within the company.

The initiative consists on having large (LCD) screens in the coffee area with internet connection and direct channel to headquarter and other subsidiaries. This will allow employees to introduce spontaneity in their global work-connections and work as effectively with their colleagues across the ocean as with their colleague next door. There could be a “yellow list” where the employees could look for each other, according to specialty, position, geography etc. What is now considered of waste of time can then be transformed into an efficiency improvement moment for the corporations.

**The Obstacles**

There are three important obstacles that companies would face when considering implementation of this project.

The first one is the fear of employees that they would be under continuous observation (“Big Brother is Watching You”). In order to prevent this perception, the live-stream chat should not be recorded in any way; it is a live connection and the data get lost as soon as they have been shown in the other location. In order to prevent employees from having the fear that they are being observed in their work, “secrecy screens” should be provided for any work stations that are in close proximity of the video cameras.

The second one is the security of data exchange. Considering that employees will use the service to discuss confidential information, there is the risk of corporate spying work. Therefore, it is fundamental to have a safe counter intelligence work to prevent relevant information to leave the company. Moreover, the security system could work to prevent the misuse of the tool, e.g. employees using it for different purposes than company information exchanges.

Finally costs will be a concern for companies. In order to implement the project on a large scale, costs for equipments may become substantial, but also the recurrent expenses to provide the service, the maintenance and the security system will add to the costs of the project. In addition, it would be difficult to “prove” the financial benefits, considering that the efficiency gains with sharing best practices are not easy to measure. However, we believe that this simple tool could bring relevant advances for large corporations in terms of better communication, more transparency and efficiency gains.