FOSTERING GROWTH: THE POWER OF STAFF ACCEPTANCE IN SHAPING STRATEGIC PLANNING WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

In the ever-evolving landscape of modern organizations, the symbiotic relationship between staff acceptance and strategic planning has emerged as a critical driver of growth and success. Staff acceptance is more than just compliance; it embodies the willingness of employees to embrace and actively support the organizational objectives laid out in strategic plans. When employees genuinely believe in the direction and goals of the organization, they become invested stakeholders, contributing their expertise and commitment to the execution of strategic initiatives. This article explores how a culture of open communication and shared purpose enhances staff acceptance. It discusses how organizations that prioritize transparency, provide avenues for employee input, and cultivate a sense of ownership are better positioned to align staff attitudes with strategic goals. Such alignment not only fuels innovation but also strengthens the execution of plans, as employees are more likely to proactively adapt to changes and overcome challenges. Ultimately, this article underscores the notion that staff acceptance is not an isolated HR concern, but a cornerstone of effective strategic planning. By nurturing an environment where staff members feel valued and integral to the organization's success, businesses can harness the power of collective dedication to drive growth and realize their long-term vision.

Keywords: Strategic Planning, UiTM2025, Staff, Acceptance

1. INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning (SP) has long been the preferred approach to strategy formulation in public organizations at all levels of government. It typically includes an analysis of an organization's mandate, mission, and vision and an analysis of an organization's internal and external environment, identifying strategic issues based on these analyses and stipulating strategies to address these issues (Bryson 2018). A recent meta-analysis indicates that SP contributes to organizational performance—and particularly organizational effectiveness—thus explaining its popularity (George, Walker, and Monster 2019).

Chronologically, SP typically starts off with the question of who to involve during SP. Subsequently, the process of SP is carried out and, ultimately, a strategic plan is delivered as the product of that process. One starts off by identifying the people, moves on to the process, and finally delivers the plan, which then needs to be implemented. Following this sequence, it can be argued, the people involved in SP will influence how the process of SP takes place. How the process of SP takes place, in turn, will influence the quality of the strategic plan, which, finally, will influence the implementation of the strategic plan.

Staff acceptance plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of strategic planning within organizations. When staff members are involved in the planning process and accept the strategic plan, they are more likely to be committed to its execution and contribute to its achievement. One key aspect of staff acceptance in strategic planning implementation is the involvement of staff members in the planning and implementation process. Research has shown that when staff members are actively engaged in the development of the strategic plan, they are more likely to understand and support the goals and objectives outlined in the plan (Casey, 2015). This involvement can be achieved through various methods, such as soliciting input and feedback from staff, conducting workshops or focus groups, and creating opportunities for staff to contribute their ideas and perspectives (Casey, 2015). By involving staff members from the beginning, organizations can foster a sense of ownership and commitment to the strategic plan, increasing the likelihood of successful implementation (Casey, 2015). Additionally, staff involvement fosters a sense of empowerment and motivation, as they feel valued and included in the decision-making process (Buller & Gypin, 2021).

Furthermore, the allocation of resources, both financial and human, is crucial for effective strategic planning implementation. Adequate financial resources are needed to support the execution of the strategic plan, including the implementation of specific initiatives and projects (Ngui & Maina, 2019). Similarly, having a capable and trained staff is essential for the successful implementation of the plan (Manero et al., 2019). Staff members need to have the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their assigned tasks and responsibilities related to the strategic plan (Manero et al., 2019). This may require providing training and professional development opportunities to ensure that staff members are equipped with the required competencies (Manero et al., 2019). By investing in resources and staff development, organizations can enhance staff acceptance and facilitate the implementation of the strategic plan.

In addition, organizational culture and leadership play a significant role in staff acceptance and strategic planning implementation. A positive organizational culture that values collaboration, open communication, and innovation can foster staff acceptance and engagement with the strategic plan (Winslett, 2016). Strong leadership that effectively communicates the vision and goals of the strategic plan, provides support and guidance to staff, and creates a conducive environment for implementation is crucial (Buller & Gypin, 2021). Leaders who actively involve staff, listen to their input, and address their concerns can build trust and commitment among staff members, leading to higher acceptance and engagement with the strategic plan (Buller & Gypin, 2021).

Moreover, the evaluation and monitoring of the strategic plan's progress are essential for staff acceptance and implementation. Regularly assessing the outcomes and impact of the plan allows organizations to identify areas of success and areas that require adjustments or improvements (Sadeghifar et al., 2017). By involving staff in the evaluation process and providing them with feedback on their contributions, organizations can reinforce staff acceptance and motivation to continue working towards the strategic goals (Sadeghifar et al., 2017). Additionally, the flexibility to adapt the plan based on emerging evidence and changing circumstances is crucial for successful implementation (Nabyonga-Orem et al., 2018). This adaptability demonstrates to staff members that their input and feedback are valued, further enhancing their acceptance and engagement with the strategic plan.

UiTM2025 is a strategic plan established by Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) that integrates policies and planning at the university, national, and global levels. The plan is based on a strategic framework that takes into account the current performance of the university, as captured through the review of the UiTM 11th Malaysia Plan and 2016-2019 UiTM's performance report. The UiTM2025 strategic plan is divided into three main strategic trusts: Quality Education, Global Excellence, and

Value-Driven Performance. Each trust has several strategic themes that outline the specific goals and objectives of the plan. Under the Quality Education trust, the strategic themes include Education 5.0@UiTM, Entrepreneurial & Well-Balanced Graduates, and Widened Access. The Global Excellence trust includes themes such as Translational Research Development Innovation and Commercialization, and Industry, Community & Alumni Smart Partnership. The Value-Driven Performance trust focuses on Talent Excellence, Agile Governance, Smart Campus, and Sustainable Funding.

The implementation of UiTM2025 involves a wide range of stakeholders, including senior management, staff, students, industry partners, and alumni. The plan aims to achieve its objectives through a combination of initiatives, programs, and partnerships that are designed to enhance the quality of education, promote global excellence, and drive value-driven performance at UiTM.

To ensure the successful implementation of this plan, it is important to monitor the understanding and commitment of staff members towards its implementation. One way to do this is by conducting a yearly survey among UiTM staff members. This survey, which is one of the efforts by the Bahagian Transformasi University, aims to identify the key issues and challenges faced by staff members in implementing the strategic plan. By regularly assessing the understanding and commitment of staff members towards UiTM2025, the university can ensure that its efforts are aligned with the needs and expectations of its staff, leading to a more successful implementation of the plan. This paper highlights the acceptance and commitment staff toward the implementation of UiTM2025 based on the yearly survey conducted by Bahagian Transformasi Universiti, Universiti Teknologi MARA.

2. METHOD

The methodology for assessing the level of awareness and understanding of UiTM2025 involved conducting a survey annually over a period of three consecutive years. The survey specifically targeted staff members, including both academic and administrative personnel, as the respondents. The survey was administered in the month of October each year, with a duration spanning one month. This approach allowed for a comprehensive examination of the evolving trends in staff awareness and comprehension regarding UiTM2025's goals and objectives. The utilization of staff members as respondents ensured insights from various facets of the university community, providing a well-rounded perspective on the effectiveness of communication and engagement strategies related to UiTM2025.

Table 1. Response Rate

Years	Duration	Respondents
2020	February - August	1220
2021	December	735
2022	June – December	157

3.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Over the course of three consecutive years, a comprehensive evaluation was conducted to gauge the level of awareness and understanding of UiTM2025 among the university's staff members. The data collected from the surveys conducted in 2020, 2021, and 2022 revealed a steady and noteworthy increase in the levels of awareness and comprehension. In 2020, 80.5% of the surveyed staff members demonstrated an understanding of UiTM2025's goals and initiatives. This percentage saw a slight increase in 2021, with 81.2% indicating a heightened awareness. However, the most significant progress was observed in 2022, with an impressive 96.2% of the staff expressing a clear understanding of UiTM2025. This progressive trend underscores the effectiveness of communication and engagement strategies employed by the university, as well as the growing integration of UiTM2025's objectives within the staff community's consciousness.

The consistent rise in the level of awareness and understanding reflects the success of the strategic initiatives put in place to disseminate information and promote engagement with UiTM2025. This upward trajectory suggests that the annual surveys conducted in October served as valuable tools for tracking and evaluating the effectiveness of communication efforts. The substantial increase from 2020 to 2022 highlights the successful alignment of staff engagement strategies with the goals and aspirations of UiTM2025, contributing to a more informed and engaged staff community that is well-equipped to actively contribute to the university's transformative journey.
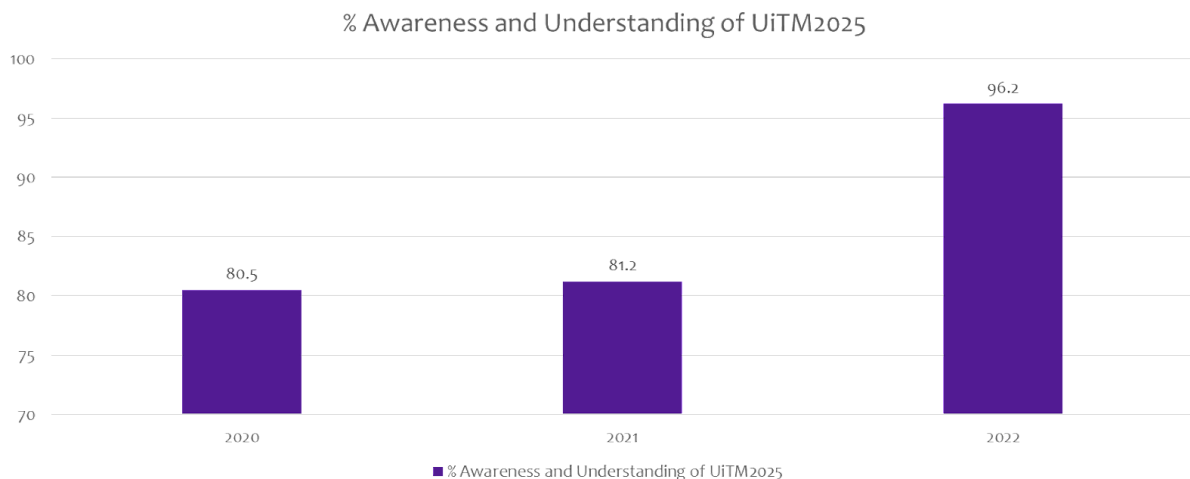
Figure 1. Awareness and Understanding on UiTM2025

Across three consecutive years of survey administration, a diverse range of responses and feedback were systematically gathered from the university's staff members, forming a crucial foundation for refining and aligning the strategic framework of UiTM2025. These valuable insights provided a nuanced understanding of staff perceptions, enabling the identification of areas requiring further clarification, communication enhancement, or strategic adjustment. By actively engaging with staff perspectives, UiTM demonstrated its commitment to creating a responsive and inclusive strategic planning process, ensuring that the aspirations and concerns of its workforce are seamlessly integrated into the ongoing evolution of UiTM2025.

Table 2. Response and feedback on UiTM2025

Response and Feedback
Year 2020
1   High teaching load by academic staff
2   Information/announcements does not reach the operational levels (example: funds - funds allocated at the university level).
3   Limited budget
4   Cost-saving efforts by the PTJ do not benefit the PTJ itself.
Year 2021
1   Financial support
2   Continuous communication on effective implementation strategies
3   Fair and equal distribution for KPI target
4   The university's visibility needs to be further enhanced.
5   Improvement of current infrastructure to support the goals of UiTM2025.
Year 2022
1   Financial support
2   Continuous training to the staff
3   Top management support
4   A clearer and easier career path
5   Resources support
6   Effective and continuous communication

In a concerted effort to ensure comprehensive alignment with the strategic objectives of the university, all responses and feedback provided by the staff were meticulously considered during the process of refining the university's key performance indicators. By valuing the insights and perspectives of its workforce, the university underscored its commitment to fostering a collaborative environment where the collective input of staff members plays a pivotal role in shaping the direction and benchmarks of success. This inclusive approach not only promotes transparency but also strengthens the resonance between the strategic vision of the institution and the efforts of its dedicated staff.

4.   CONCLUSION

Strategic planning (SP) has long been the preferred approach to strategy formulation in public organizations at all levels of government. When staff members are involved in the planning process and accept the strategic plan, they are more likely to be committed to its execution. UiTM2025 is a strategic plan established by UiTM that integrates policies and planning at the university, national, and global levels. The plan aims to achieve its objectives through a combination of initiatives, programs, and partnerships that are designed to enhance the quality of education, promote global excellence, and drive value-driven performance. UiTM2025 surveyed its staff members for three years. The responses and feedback formed a crucial foundation for refining and aligning the strategic framework. By actively engaging with staff perspectives, UiTM demonstrated its commitment to creating a responsive and inclusive strategic planning.

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