Mars Inc. Final Company Analysis

Doug Connors

Pennsylvania State University
Mars Inc. is a privately-owned family business in the manufacturing and production industry that does more than $35 billion dollars in sales from six main businesses: Petcare, Chocolate, Wrigley, Food, Drinks and Symbioscience and they have more than 100,000 employees worldwide from the 19 countries featured in the World’s Best list.

To be eligible for the World’s Best Workplaces list, a company must apply and be named to minimum of five national Best Workplaces lists within a list of 58 countries, have five thousand employees or more worldwide, and at least 40% of the company’s workforce must be based outside of the home country (Great Place to Work, 2018). Mars Inc. sits as the third ranked company in the world by these standards, but the question other companies are trying to figure out is what is Mars Inc. doing so well? What does Mars Inc. do so well that has their employees speak so favourably about them? The answer is, plenty. There is no one thing that leads to this success, it is a combination of industry practises that empowers employees, builds trust amongst employees and creates a general sense that Mars Inc. is about more than making money. Mars Inc. is about the people, and if you develop the people success will be a by-product.

Mars Inc. has worked hard to earn their place on the Great Place to Work list and it begins with the leadership of their management group. Mars Inc. has some of the world’s best practices as it relates to diversity, inclusion and contribution to society. (World's Best Workplaces - 2018, 2018) This all begins with their Human Rights Policy. This policy which complements other Mars policies, programs and practises shows that they will respect and promote human rights in their value chain, starting with areas where they have the greatest control, influence and greatest impact. To implement this policy Mars focuses on two areas:
their operations, where they have the most control; and sourcing, where they can have the greatest impact. Mars will make every effort to equip their associates with training and raise their awareness of human rights, identify and validate the effectiveness of their initiatives through their risk and impact assessments and remediate any adverse human rights impacts and mitigate risks (Mars Inc. and their Affiliates, 2018). This policy displays the characteristics evident in the leadership theory of the style approach, specifically consideration behaviours, which is about relationships. The company takes an interest in workers as human beings, value their individuality, and give special attention to their personal needs. (Gatto, 2018)

Another practise that Mars Inc. is performing that makes it such a “great place to work” is their commitment to transparency. In many situations, companies that do not rank amongst the world’s greatest places to work, leadership groups are often small, closed entities filled with secrecy and resulting in distrust. Mars Inc. is unique in this regard, they go to lengths such as stating their goals on their website and additionally provide feedback as to where they are in meeting their goals. One such example is the company’s goal of increasing the number of women in management and executive positions, where as to date they report a progress report stating they’ve increased their percentage of female managers to 41 percent, not perfect, but transparent and showing they are putting forth an effort (Mars Inc and its Affiliates, 2018) When leaders perform these types of actions they demonstrate an understanding of the taxonomy of social power. Being transparent allows leaders to demonstrate that they are open to being influenced, which in turn allows leaders to share power, take advantage of various sources of power and increase those various sources. (Gatto, 2018) Being transparent also builds trust amongst followers. Admitting shortcomings and being forthright about those shortcomings
shows a vulnerability that everyone can relate to and that makes their company seem more trustworthy.

Mars Inc. has many individual programs and niches that separates them from other companies to be sure, but then again other companies could copy programs. What Mars Inc. has managed to create is a workplace culture in which their leadership has established, operationalized and sustained the values and vision by which their organizations thrive. Mars Inc. does so through their five principles: quality, responsibility, mutuality, efficiency and freedom. The five principles are the key to their culture and they strive to live by them everyday. The principles serve as a compass to help guide business decisions, and unite them as a group across geographies, languages, cultures and generations. The result is a stronger relationship with everyone. (Mars Inc and its Affiliates, 2018). Ginnett’s Team Effectiveness Leadership Model draws a lot of similarities to how Mars Inc. is doing business. There is a clear sense of direction and purpose or Dream Function, the team is carefully designed to share leadership from a diversified set of opinions and with their policy on transparency, they can analyze, evaluate and be corrective; they are forced to perform ongoing coaching at various stages while tasks are still being completed. (Gatto, 2018) Anytime you can create a scenario in which all employees have had input into creating a shared vision and values and then live those values as a way to operate, not just place a set of words on poster, you will have highly satisfied employees, and highly satisfied employees who feel valued, enjoy coming to work and therefore are more productive. As stated earlier, the returns of success are a by-product of the process.

Within my organization many lessons can be learned from Mars Inc. and many of their practises should be emulated. Establishing values and a vision is an exercise all organizations should engage in, it can and should guide you through most decisions that you may be forced to
make. It talks about what you stand for as a company and how you wish to conduct business. These values and visions must be operationalized however, or they are merely words. My organization could benefit from this exercise by collaborating to create these values and visions, inclusively and then there must be training to support those values that have been established. Currently, my organization does not have a very robust orientation process for new employees, this would be a wonderful time to educate people on our organization’s values and to be clear that we expect those working here to make decisions based on those values.

To establish values and a vision as a leadership group is a part of the solution; operationalizing those values and vision is another part of the solution, but there must also be a sustainability to the values and vision. My organization could learn from Mars Inc, I have been with my organization for now eighteen years and over the course of time I have witnessed the erosion of values. If not continuously reinforced and protected, an organization’s values will erode over time, they must be vigilantly protected. (Disney Institute, 2018) My organization needs to learn to “stay the course”, understand who we are and operate under that pretense.

Mars Inc. has been able to sustain their values because they develop leaders through professional development opportunities and these leaders continue the legacy of leaders before them. My organization could certainly adopt some of these principles. For too long, as an organization we have done a poor job of intentionally looking for people who are displaying leadership behaviours and providing them the development tools to succeed. In doing this Mars Inc. is displaying servant leadership.

Mars Inc. is ranked third amongst the world’s greatest workplaces and by all accounts they work hard to be in that position. Their leadership, which is comprised of, not a person but
by all who are employed by Mars Inc. live the values of the company, and their actions and
decisions are evident in those values. They have created a culture that empowers employees and
makes each member feel engaged in the company’s success. This stems from servant leadership
whereas the leadership group seem to truly believe and act upon a desire to make their followers
successful. They are honest with their followers and treat them as though they were partners and
not employees. To use an analogy of movie, Mars Inc. does not treat their employees merely as
actors but as writers and producers, helping to create their organization’s story. This create
outcomes in which the followers’ performance and growth and the organization’s performance
help create societal impact. (Gatto, 2018)

From a perspective of my own organization I would summarize by stating that like Mars
Inc. has done, we could really stand to have a strategic plan to guide us along our journey and
make decisions. Like Mars Inc. we need to establish what as an organization we value and then
we must govern our actions based off those values. These are details that matter if one truly
wants to have an organization that garners attention amongst the world’s greatest workplaces, we
must be intentional where others are unintentional as it relates to servant leadership and
developing ourselves as leaders and contributing members of a growing organization.
References


https://psu.instructure.com/courses/1913867/pages/l11-model?module_item_id=25173494


