

The Trindade Group – A Case of Human Relations Being Transferred to Superior Packaging for Customers Worldwide

Teaching note

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1. Introduction

The case takes around 80 minutes to complete in class, depending on the discussion that is generated. More mature students will naturally possibly have more to contribute, so lecturers should allow more time for discussion in courses at the master's or executive level. After reading the case (allow 15 minutes for this) the questions posed will occupy the following time slots, as in table 1.

Table 1 – Questions posed in the case and respective time slots

Question asked in the case study	Time for discussion (add 15 minutes for reading of case)
1. How has Cartonagem Trindade changed over time?	10 minutes
2. To what does Cartonagem Trindade currently owe its success?	10 minutes
3. What sort of leadership style does the Director Pedro Ventura follow?	10 minutes
4. Is this leadership style commonplace in Portugal, in your opinion?	10 minutes
5. How does the management and leadership style at Cartonagem Trindade fit your own personal and preferred management and leadership style? Give examples with regards to your own past performance in team settings.	15 minutes
6. Does Cartonagem Trindade have a market orientation? Why?	10 minutes

2. Objectives of the case

The learning objectives of the case are related to the concepts of organizational change, leadership, market orientation, and organizational culture. Self-awareness by students, of their preferred leadership style, is also promoted by the case. In an environment where students will often be required to travel during their careers, being aware that leadership styles vary according to national culture and from organization to organization is an important aspect of the academic teaching of management.

3. Questions posed in the case

The questions asked in the case are answered below:

1. How has Cartonagem Trindade changed over time?

Over time Cartonagem Trindade has greatly improved its infrastructure (buildings, warehouse, machinery), while it has also become a “cleaner” industry, with more value-added, having become a strategic partner of its customer base, as most marketers “treat packaging... as an element of product strategy” (Kotler and Keller, 2009, p.379). Additionally, “many marketers have called packaging a fifth P, along with price, product, place, and promotion” (Kotler and Keller, 2009, p.379), which is testimony to how packaging has grown in importance over time. Packaging is now more design-oriented. Cartonagem Trindade has grown from less than a half dozen people to having 135 people (in 2014), in what is an ever more international company. Lúcio (2012, p.58) adds that “agreeing to pay the price of quality, Trindade has invested more than 20 million Euros in its production lines. In 2013 an additional 3.5 million Euros were to be invested, to create new jobs and open up new markets”.

2. To what does Cartonagem Trindade currently owe its success?

Cartonagem Trindade currently owes its success to superior leadership, attention to detail, disciplined product and process innovation, saving and cutting out cost and giving back value to the customer and, above all, recognising that the *customer is king* – sound advice to anyone wanting to make a name for him or herself in an industry where there is a market for superior differentiated products – intricately tailored to what are, at times, elaborate customer requests.

Cartonagem Trindade is doing a better job than competitors, namely their products permit easy identification of customer brands, they communicate essential information – also known as “point-of-purchase advertising” (Bassin, 1988, p.21) – while facilitating safe and practical product transportation, making way for superior storage, and aiding product consumption, which is what superior packaging sets out to achieve (Bassin, 1988).

3. What sort of leadership style does the Director Pedro Ventura follow?

Pedro Ventura can be said to have a trusting, servant leadership style, whereby he genuinely seeks “to improve how we treat those who do the work within our many institutions. Servant leadership truly offers hope and guidance for a new era in human development, and for the creation of better, more caring institutions” (Spears, 2010, p.24). Servant leadership is about “serving others – including employees, customers, and community – as the top priority” (Spears, 2010, p.13). Leadership can be defined on a continuum, with servant leadership on one end and autocratic leadership – “leading for self over others... authority-driven... [in] a high fear, low trust environment” (Laub, 2010, p.110) – on the other. An intermediate leadership type is paternalistic leadership – the majority of companies having a “parent-child relational dynamic” (Laub, 2010, p.110).

4. Is this leadership style commonplace in Portugal, in your opinion?

No, this leadership style is not commonplace in Portugal, in my opinion, as confirmed also by Oliveira and Ferreira (2012). In Portugal there are “cultural expectations of followers for more authoritarian forms of leadership” (Irving, 2010, p.125; Hofstede, 2001). Thus, as in other countries also, choosing a servant leader approach is a risk and may decrease leadership influence in the organization (Irving, 2010).

A significant amount of the studies about leadership focus on the environment in the USA and in other developed countries (Teixeira, 2013), often very different to Portugal, for example. Thus, students should be aware that leadership styles vary in different countries and across organizations and if one is to find an organization which fits one’s personal style and preference, effort should be expended to thrive and grow within that organizational setting.

The main regions focused on in the management literature refer to the USA, Japan and Europe (Teixeira, 2013), though, admittedly, Europe and the USA are more similar to each other than to Japan (Teixeira, 2013). Europe is still the stage to some cultural differences,

however, in particular between countries in the North and in the South of Europe (Oliveira and Ferreira, 2013).

5. How does the management and leadership style at Cartonagem Trindade fit your own personal and preferred management and leadership style?

Sample answer by one of the authors: As I am not motivated by “punishment avoidance” an autocratic style, at work, might have limited results with me. In line with the majority of respondents to a survey by Oliveira and Ferreira (2012), I would like to work in a servant leadership organization (such as that found at Cartonagem Trindade), where innovation is encouraged and flourishes (Oliveira and Ferreira, 2012). While working for a North American multinational I was in charge of training in the three European facilities, from the executive level down to the factory shop-floor. Having been given the freedom (by the Vice President and CEO for European operations) to adopt the training methodologies I deemed more appropriate (on topics such as leadership, conflict management, production team supervising, quality control and customer satisfaction), for the company-wide training sessions in Europe – for facilities in diverse countries including Portugal, Austria and the Czech Republic – significant results were achieved – including increased productivity, lower absenteeism, greatly improved product quality and customer satisfaction – and important new customer groups won. The encouragement given by senior management throughout the process was also very gratifying.

6. Does Cartonagem Trindade have a market orientation? Why?

Kholid and Jaworski (1990) and Narver and Slater (1990) were pioneers in the study of market orientation and were responsible for the preparation of two scales measuring the level of market orientation: MKTOR (Narver & Slater, 1990) and MARKOR (Jaworski & Kholi, 1993). For Kholi and Jaworski (1990) market orientation is based on the organization-wide generation of market intelligence regarding current and future customer needs, the dissemination of intelligence within the firm and organization-wide responsiveness. They identified three major market intelligence factors: generation, dissemination and response. Narver and Slater (1990) suggest that market orientation consists of the following components: consumer orientation, competition orientation and inter-functional coordination. Although it is certainly beyond the scope of this case study to implement a scale to measure how market-oriented Cartonagem Trindade is, one is led to believe that Cartonagem Trindade does have a market orientation, as one may read in the case, “the Trindade logo does not appear on its boxes, unless a customer specifically requests it, as the philosophy is that “the customer must ‘shine’, not

Trindade”. A market orientation involves “the orientation of organizational culture... and organizational processes towards the firm’s customers” (Homburg et al., 2013, p.558). Organizational culture can be defined as “a set of beliefs or standards, shared by a group of people, which help the individual decide what is, what can be, how to feel, what to do and how to go about doing it” (Goodenough, 1971, as quoted by Usunier and Lee, 2005, p.5). At Cartonagem Trindade the emphasis is on making the customer more successful through superior packaging and in the process Cartonagem Trindade prefers to keep a ‘low profile’, indeed remaining, for the most part, anonymous. Clearly, at Cartonagem Trindade, “the product offered by the firm and the customer-related behaviour of the firm correspond to customer needs and competitive requirements” (Homburg et al., 2013, p.558). At Cartonagem Trindade, the orientation of management, by showing less of its brand, actually means more to the customer, thus solidifying and promoting closer and stronger customer relationships. Other studies that students can address to keep abreast of the market orientation concept are Liao et al. (2011), Matsuno et al. (2005) and Moreira and Silva (2013).

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