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**Pledge Towards Workforce Diversity and Organisational wellbeing:
A Case Study of Aviva Plc.**

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Introduction

The rapid change in the competitive landscape within the business and consumer insurance services industry has contributed to the continuous reassessment and development of successful management strategies by the key industry players. According to a publication by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation Development (OECD) in 2017, the worldwide insurance market indicates convincing and divergence in premiums collected. The statistics collated identifies increasing premium collection across various key players in countries that were not traditionally included in previous surveys. For example, the report indicates the increasing importance of players in countries such as Lithuania. The 21.5% direct gross premiums increase in Lithuania was higher than Canada (2.9%) and Spain (12.1%).

This trend has significant implications for the key industry players and leaders such as Aviva operating in the multinational market. Within the local and global insurance markets, the increasing need for consumers to go for ‘value for money deals’ regarding required services, less reliance on so called ‘middlemen’ or brokers and the increase availability of insurers offering tailored services (mostly online) are some of the factors squeezing industry margins. It is, therefore, incumbent on multinational firms such as Aviva to constantly reassess and develop new strategies to compete successfully in both the short and long term.

With regards to both the short and long term management strategies in developing and sustaining competitiveness, Aviva rank very well within the industry sector. The company was ranked as one of the world’s biggest 25 insurance companies in 2017 (Forbes 2017). Aviva competes with global insurance giants such as Zurich, Prudential and AXA. Some of the broader competitive strategies adopted by Aviva

revolve around differentiation as well as focus leadership. Porter (1980) argues that in both short and long term, the ability for firms to develop sustainable competitive advantage requires a focus on setting themselves apart by adopting viable differentiation strategies. Such strategies range from simply offering a reputable brand name to offering of service value to the market. Through the adoption of foresight methods, the company has been able to carve a very reputable brand name and experience with which the target market identifies.

Similarly, extensive fragmentation of insurance markets requires companies to tailor insurance products to the needs of the market. This has also been successfully offered by Aviva through a range of services in its portfolio. Overall, Aviva responds positively to the changing marketing place of savvy consumers within the local and global markets. Some of the management strategies adopted by the company to deal with such market dynamism and competitiveness are going to be reviewed and discussed later in the case study.

The primary purpose of this case study is to discuss Aviva's embrace of workforce diversity and pledge which emphasized organisational wellbeing as a needed strategy for addressing future challenges. This chapter focuses on the role of related foresight methods adopted, the critical success factors and business practices developed to ensure company flexibility and capability to compete, and last but not the least, the adoption of a range of strategies to achieve and maintained the organisation pledge towards these efforts.

Headquartered in London, in the United Kingdom, and with a 300-year heritage, Aviva Plc is a British multinational firm offering a broad range of financial services in life, general insurance and pensions. The financial services provided specifically include workplace pensions, savings, healthcare and personal investments. On its global scale of operations, the company has subsidiaries in countries such as Canada, France, India, Italy and China. Aviva Plc employ over 28,000 people with a current customer base around 31 million globally. With over 16 million customers worldwide the company is poised to provide personal and commercial insurance products to meet customers demand.

The company takes pride in its captivating mission statement “We are committed to serving our customers well in order to build a stronger, sustainable business, which makes a positive contribution to society, and for which our people are proud to work.”

Discussion

Role of Foresight in Futures Thinking at Aviva

Organisational foresight has played a key role in Aviva Plc’s growth and development of its sustainable competitive advantage in the long-term. From a strategic perspective, the organisational foresight embraced by Aviva Plc means understanding the importance of preserving its human resources as an asset for future growth and development of sustainable competitive advantage. This approach has been fundamental to the company’s success. Various human capital theories emphasise the importance of leveraging the skills sets and competencies of staff within organisations. Existing literature on leveraging human capital resource in the service industry, specifically, by Aryee et al (2016), draws on the link between human capital resource and high organisational performance.

Some implications of such linkages between human capital resource and high organisational performance in the service sector are underpinned by organisational focus on developing the wellbeing of employees. This is pivotal in sustaining competitive advantage in the long-term. As noted by the Managing Director of Commercial General Insurance UK, Angus Eaton:

“the health and wellbeing of our employees is a priority for Aviva because we recognise that mental health is as important as an individual’s physical health but often it is either overlooked or hidden” (para. 3). Aviva wants to help break down the barriers to mental health, and ensure that employees feel they are supported and listened to when they raise issues around how they are feeling. “Making a commitment to the mental wellbeing of our employees is good for everyone [including] business, because it is essential that everyone comes to work feeling they can be open about where they are in life and that if help is needed, their colleagues will be understanding and supportive” (Aviva 2017).

Foresight methods at Aviva

Johnson et.al (2017) identify that long-term organisational survival is incumbent on continuous scanning of the business environment. Hindsight and experience from operating in the insurance industry have both been critical for Aviva in appreciating the ever-changing and dynamic nature of the sector. The two most important foresight methods adopted by Aviva to address future issues are environmental scanning and strategic planning.

The continuous scanning of the business environment by Aviva highlights the impact of critical environmental forces such as competition and sector regulation. Competition coupled with the increasing risk involved in payments of huge insurance claims to individuals and businesses means that there is constantly a squeeze on sector margins. Some of the strategic responses adopted by Aviva to deal with the competitive nature of the environment are the offering of a variety of insurance services to cater for the needs of increasingly fragmented markets and diversification into unrelated core product offering such as asset management. Additionally, heavy regulation of the sector by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) in the UK regarding adherence to policies and industry codes of conduct requires that the company operates within the appropriate standards of behaviour.

Strategic planning as a foresight method addresses how the corporate mission of Aviva may be achieved. Kotler and Armstrong (2015) contend that the importance of having a realistic strategic plan is that, it sets out the blue print needed to achieve long-term organisational goals. Similarly, De Wit and Meyer (2014) concur that successful strategic planning process should always consider 'how' and 'where' an organisation should compete in the industry to survive in the long-term. The critical implication of this perspective on strategic planning for Aviva requires iterative assessment of its corporate and business-level strategies. As pointed out by De Wit and Meyer (2014), corporate and business-level strategies focus on organisational responsiveness and use of resources in the business, respectively.

The business model of Aviva is carefully crafted to focus on differentiation of the organisation and its offerings to serve customer needs through the creation of sustainable values, strengths, skills and customer-centric strategies (Aviva 2018). Through organisational foresight initiatives, the company has identified best strategies

to ensure being a prime supporter and champion of diversity at the workplace. Aviva follows the requirements of the EU Gender Directive and the Sex Discrimination Regulations regarding the equal treatment between men and women in insurance and financial services. A recent policy and pledge within the organisation is focused on widening the diversity capabilities to include mental health and wellbeing of its employees. In May 2017, the company signed an employer pledge titled 'Time to Change', which is a growing social movement run by charities Mind and Rethink Mental Illness which supports people to open to mental health problems.

Aviva's flexibility, capability and competitiveness

Flexibility in contemporary organisations reflects the ability to respond to environmental trends. There are different types of flexibility in organisations. These are numerical, functional and financial flexibility. Numerical flexibility is the extent to which employees can be increased or decreased in an organisation due to labour requirements. Numerical flexibility can be carefully crafted to deal with supply and demand of the labour market in response to the level of organisational growth. The constant shift towards online sales of insurance services requires that Aviva focus resources in training or developing the skills of its staff to deal with online queries. Similarly, Aviva may also resort to employing more staff with skills required to serve customers online for the range of online and off-line services. Recent service added on the website such as 'Aviva Advisers' may require having more staff to deal with adviser queries. Conversely, numerical flexibility may warrant downsizing and terminating contracts with third party organisations due to decreasing demand of services.

Functional flexibility focuses on how smoothly employees can be redeployed between tasks and activities within an organisation. Aviva offers a range of financial and investment products. These products range from pensions, investments, annuities to personal and business protection. Functional flexibility is critical when the company needs to leverage high performance and productivity of the workforce. The capacity to be functionally flexible impacts an organisation's competitiveness. Multi-skilled staff are able to be deployed across a range of tasks.

Another benefit of functional flexibility within an organisation is the possible increase in motivation and performance of multi-skilled staff. As noted by researchers such as Vroom, the outcome of effort expended on a task in the workplace by an employee is partly dependent on skills. These skills trigger employees to put an effort into tasks which would then lead to performance and valuable outcomes. This is how functional flexibility plays a key role in organisational performance. Multiskilled staff are highly likely to perform due to the high strong motivations. This in turn increases productivity and competitiveness for organisations in the long-term.

Last but not the least, financial flexibility relates to how remuneration is adapted to reflect performance, supply and demand in the external labour market. Financial flexibility is critical to overall competitiveness of Aviva. As a public limited entity, the company is able to source funds from investors to increase the size of operations. The company continues to expand its operations by acquiring other related and unrelated businesses across the globe. In late 2017, the company acquired majority shareholding in Wealthify Group Limited, a holding company of the Wealthify brand- a low cost ‘robo’ investment service helping to make investments affordable and accessible to the UK mass market. Such investments and acquisitions have been made possible due to Aviva’s financial flexibility.

Some researchers on organisational flexibility suggest that the importance of the growing flexibilities in organisations is to enable quick change within the business environment (Atkinson 1984). A dominant flexible approach common within Aviva is functional flexibility. As discussed in the earlier sections of this case study and evidenced in the company’s business model on the corporate website (<http://www.aviva.co.uk/>), Aviva has capacity to invest in the skills of its people to make them functionally flexible. This is a classic view of sustainable competitive advantage on the basis of developing human resource capabilities.

Aviva has achieved flexibility, capability and competitiveness by having diverse people within the organisation who have the right set of skills and mental wellbeing. Through adopting an integrated approach of top management support and holistic feedback from different parts of the organisation, the company pledges to work towards the promotion of workforce diversity emphasising on organisational

wellbeing. Recently, Aviva has been leading its industry sector in finding innovative approaches to develop its human capital to increase productivity in the long-term. Aviva Plc mission statement resonates with its quest to become one of the global brands offering a range of personal and business financial products to serve its customers worldwide, making a healthy and positive working environment for its people to contribute to society.

Aviva's Successful Business Partnerships

Aviva's success stem from various directions, including innovative factory set-up to help Small Medium Enterprise (SME) operators re-energised their businesses and ideas, through various interagency events and workshops all year round. Aviva and Founders Factory (2017) delivers various programmes for entrepreneurs in different stages of business development, providing face to face, collaborative peer sessions and pitch nights for new business starters and organisations and individuals looking to innovate. Aviva also has a healthy network of mentors extended across a range of business sectors, who provide advice for businesses to avoid severe or costly mistakes by matching them with mentors for directions and advice in different stages.

Another successful partnership occurred in November 2008, when Aviva team up with Daihatsu and SsangYong car manufacturers to generate opportunities to increase their sales, with a drive towards innovative free seven day insurance product for HPI group of companies. These initiatives brought growth, removed obstacles with the dealers by securing customers satisfactions through quick sales dealership packages. The dealership deals between Aviva with car manufacturers brought about competitive insurance packages and helped lower average insurance premiums in recent years.

Aviva engagement with strategic partnerships to help inform their future-oriented visioning is not new to the company. Back in May 2016, Aviva formed with an earlier relationship with Founders Factory- a prominent multi-sector digital accelerator and incubator to build and develop over 200 innovative technologies to support Aviva broader digital strategy in the next five years (Enterprise Tech News 2016). This provided Aviva opportunities to recreate and design new ideas tailored at making insurance and financial services easily accessible to Aviva customers. These

initiatives enabled Founders Factory to provide in-house training, hands on support to help Aviva launch their new products.

Aviva Venture capitals, in summary supports a series of digital and new technology businesses by providing early stage capital investment for entrepreneurs with viable business initiatives. So far, Aviva ventures have committed over £20m yearly for five years targeting key four business areas; internet connecting homes, cars and health, data and analytics, and innovative customer experiences and distribution. Other Aviva recent investments include affordable Cocoon home security system, general insurance, life insurance, and health and asset management insurance for over 33 million customers across 16 markets globally, leading insurers in every four households in the UK, and selected markets in Europe, Asia and Canada. Finally, Aviva is involved in asset management, where Aviva offers asset management to Aviva personnel and clients, currently managing over £289 billion in properties.

Management Strategies at Aviva to Sustain Success

Strategic management helps organisation identify the values of examining environments in order to formulate strategies allied to environmental conditions and increase dependence on strategic management in order to cope with environmental changes and mounting competitions (Smith, et al. 1991). Liabotis (2007) also identifies three processes for sustainable growth for organisations primary business which often include service, customers, the products and geographic areas and channels of distributions. Similarly, evaluation of organisations overall performance of its core business involves assessing rate of growth and revenue generation, reputation, essential customers and benchmarking effectiveness. Indeed, these key elements can easily be identified with Aviva organisations.

Aviva strategy to sustain success is driven by customers' needs. Aviva strengthens this process by simplifying their business operations through international focus under the leadership headed by CEO's both in UK and in other geographical branches (Aviva 2018). The CEO's are responsible for heading Aviva's Insurance and other business operations in each country. Such an approach helps Aviva with their international strategic focus, policies and ability to separate insurance business from digital business operations, and strengthen investor confidence. Aviva is also the first

Canadian insurers to established online customer panels, committing to listening and responding to customers' needs, offering them second to none insurance experience, as part of the strategy to sustain growth. Aviva's online panel attracts over 6,000 customers, providing an opportunity to interact and provide feedbacks on customers related issues and on business performance (Aviva 2018).

In recent years, a number of management strategies, including employee and client wellbeing, have enabled Aviva to successfully focus on transformation that will bring growth to the organisation with robust financial standings in the sector. Aviva is now in a vibrant position with its strategy directing at offering customers inclusive series of insurance products through their digital capabilities known as "True Customer Composite and Digital First" and tightened the group geographic focus with integration of Friends Life acquisition to further enhance the business operating performance.

Moreover, Aviva strategy is to continue to maintain their effort in transformation to enhance operating performance, continue to deepen its business position within the UK market and grow core international markets by strengthening and diversifying Aviva businesses.

Aviva's Organisational Policies to Ensure Sustainability

Contemporary organisations are bombarded both internally and externally today with temptations testing value and integrity of operations. Rapid change in technology, globalisation, and workforce diversity exerts pressure on organisational business and financial competitiveness. Crises such as Enron and a worldwide banking collapse create scandals that result from shortcuts taken in production and oversight (Ballinger 2011). A loss of trust and confidence may result. Increased scrutiny begins to occur by all stakeholders (i.e. investors, government, employees, and executive management).

Research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) illustrates the significance of organisational culture in developing and sustaining strategies with meaningful values that can then be used to facilitate strategic decision-making that supports desirable behaviour (2012). Similarly, Eccles et al. (2011) show that organisations which evolve to developing and implementing sustainability strategies

do so with sustainability policies both internal to the organisation and in a broader social context. These sustainability policies are embraced by Aviva, not for the sake of public relations, but for the benefit from enhanced social and economic (fiscal) performance (Eccles et al. 2011). Strategies of sustainability, supported through internal organisational policy and broader social policy, are built upon the beliefs and values that underpin the organisation's business objectives.

Aviva has taken a critical approach to building a culture of sustainability through development of broad social policies and internal organisational policies. Aviva considers this approach beneficial to business. As research illustrates, such strategies considerably enhance relationships with all stakeholder, including their intra-and inter-agency partners, as well as, the government (Kielstra 2008).

With particular reference to the organisation's personnel, Aviva's significant commitments to sustainability were recognised in 2009 with its employee promise. The employee promise was created by Aviva in re-organisation of individual participation in organisational growth, identifying the value placed on each employee's contribution. This recognition constitutes six key components, including making most of work, leadership, culture buildings development enhancement, team building and reward (Aviva 2010).

Finally, sustainable policies, as a general strategy, are now aligned to Aviva's business goals and sanctioned by all board of directors and available to all stakeholders. Aviva has several policies and standards now in place which reflect their commitment and responsibility to both employees internal to the organisation and to society at large. Aviva embraces these policies as a way to ensure long-term business sustainability into the future.

Following is a summary of some of Aviva's social policies and internal organisational policies to enhanced future sustainability:

Investors' stewardship and responsible investment policy: This was initiated in 1990 through management of equities, assets and stretches across Aviva's client assets. Remarkably, in 2014 Aviva was the first to assimilate environmental, social

and governance concerns into decision making in all categories of assets across the business. This approach helps Aviva to actively promote good business practice with investors and minimise risk in their portfolio (Aviva 2017).

Human Rights and Business ethics policy: Aviva's human rights policy is steered by the UN Global Compact principles on Human Rights and Labour Standards, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations, the Tripartite Declaration of Principles, the Women's Empowerment Principles and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (Aviva Human Rights Policy 2017).

Aviva is persistent in fostering organisational culture that respects human rights, dignity and individual recognitions within Aviva's operations and external business relations. These are facilitated through Aviva's codes, business practices, HR procedures and protocols, as a founding signatory to the UN Principles of Sustainable Insurance.

Aviva strongly forbids all kinds of discrimination in relation to family status, marital status, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, age, ethnic origin, union status or disability, faith, colour, race and Nationality (Wilson 2017). Also, Aviva upholds corporate ethics, integrity and honesty to the highest standard and conduct all business dealings as outlined by laws and regulations applicable to the sector in which they operate in accordance with the business values and standards.

Cluster munitions policy. In 2008, the Aviva board acknowledged that the production of cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines destabilised essential human rights. Hence, Aviva decided to evade holding assets that are linked to those organisations involved in production of cluster munitions or ant-personnel mines. In 2011, Aviva further strengthen its decisions with more exclusion of policyholder and funds from insurance written by Aviva that are linked with these type of organisations.

Aviva updates this information regularly and made them available for ther shareholders and clients. Aviva also employs the services of third party on the process to help identify those organisations engaging in the production of cluster munitions

and anti-personnel mines. Aviva often communicates with those organisations requesting assurance that they are not in any way involved in cluster munitions or anti-personnel mine production or face being placed on Aviva's STOP LIST (Aviva 2012). Aviva frequently engages with the producers in scope by asking them to ease the production of cluster munitions and review the list of organisations annually. Any organisation identified, Aviva seek to divest its assets within 90 days.

Customer experience business standard: Customers experience help through Aviva's defined standard requirements and maintained mutually beneficially relationships with their clients, and achieve long-term sustainability. Aviva strives to treat customers fairly and with integrity. This helps them in maintaining good reputation and growth and has resulted in clients recommending others to Aviva organisation, buying more and staying longer. This approach steered Aviva to high expectations and outcomes; they also provide their customers with business standard that outlines simple, easy and fair services while fostering sustainable business relationships. It also installs confidence that the products that customers buy meet their needs. Aviva takes customer complaints seriously and investigates them thoroughly. Aviva also control their process through monitoring and with the use of matric for consistency and coordination of activities externally and internally.

Health and safety business standard: Aviva's health and safety business standard lays out the requirements for the successful management and control of health and safety (H&S) risk across Aviva. It guides Aviva to ensure that they provide a safe and healthy environment for all personnel on Aviva sites. This policy also ensures control and management of any extenuating risk arising from Aviva's business conduct. Aviva conducts sustainable health & safety framework implementation with the standard through compliance reporting and audit with successful outcomes. The outcomes enable Aviva to develop and implement well-defined roles and responsibilities in consultation with their employees and with collaboration with local H & S policy and by ensuring that adequate resources are available with experienced H & S advice, which must be considered before any procurement.

Internal control business standard: Aviva has established a standard within the organisation that enables them to control internal operations and share best practices

across teams. At times, this effort relies on multiple principles to ensure its effectiveness from top to the bottom of the organisation. This policy addresses issues of exposures, malpractice (and reporting incidents), provisions for suitable resources and open communication. This code of practice and standard is accompanied annually by Aviva employees' sign-up as commitment to integrity, acceptable behaviour and compliance facilitated by internal system, structure, model and proportional segregation of duties designed for efficiency. Aviva also has effective system with delegated authorities, as defined by clearly out-lined roles and responsibilities in meeting set-out objectives and reviewing of performance.

Conclusion

The success of businesses today in both the short and long-term is underpinned by careful crafting of management strategies to compete within the ever-changing industry. Although the global (insurance) service industry has recorded significant growth in the last couple of years post-recession, it continues to face challenges. These challenges range in complexity from developing sustainable strategies to continually and successfully manage service demands, being flexible and adaptable enough to respond real-time, to the hyper-competition of the digital connected global marketplace.

Aviva operates in the services sector across the globe. In most of the markets of operation however, the company continually faces threat from both local and global competition. Notwithstanding, the low entry barriers to the service sector which facilitate ease of entry and eventually increased numbers of industry players, resulting rivalry also forces service industry businesses to reassess their competitive standing in both the short and long-term. As posited by Porter (1980), developing sustainable competitive strategy is critical for organisational long-term survival.

From the perspective of Aviva, one of the key long-term sustainable strategies being championed is the focus on organisational wellbeing. Aviva embraces an approach focused on workforce diversity, with the view that providing a diverse workforce specific initiatives to support organisational wellbeing, would go a long way to improve employee motivation, productivity and organisational competitiveness. This is grounded in human resource capital theory (Buta 2015).

Organisational foresight is critical for developing sustainable competitive advantage in the short and long-term. Foresight methods such as environmental scanning and strategic planning are been used by organisations to clearly detect, understand and plan in the global marketplace. It is evident that the changing political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, legal and ecological landscape will continue to impact on how businesses operate.

Aviva continues to adapt very well to changing landscape using a range of foresight methods to respond to such changes. For example, the current emphasis on work force diversity through the adoption of well-being initiatives is a direct response to the changing socio-cultural and politico-legal environment. Social cultural pressures such as diminishing disposable income and work-life balance are impacting on the quality of work and performance in the workplace. Increasing regulations by governments on the need to provide equal opportunities and support mental wellbeing have been common in emerging and developed markets. Overall, the development of well-being initiatives by Aviva using organisational foresight has been a step in the right direction- creating employee and broader stakeholder value in the long-term.

This case study addressed the importance of the link between organisational flexibility, capability and competitiveness. In the case Aviva, a range of flexibility and capability dimensions have been explored. Although an organisation may evidence a dominant flexible approach in a bid to stay competitive, it is not unusual to observe other dimensions of flexibility in terms of its ability to have multi-skilled staff to be deployed for a range of tasks if need be or to be able to be flexible financially. .

Aviva's successful business efforts have also been attributed to the development of initiatives to support the growth of other businesses. This is consistent to the findings from Carroll (2015), as related to the framework for corporate responsibility. Some of the initiatives such as the Aviva Factory and development of successful partnerships have been fundamental to the company's success. Sustainable partnerships like these create value and help in the development of reputable brand image across organisations (Kotler and Armstrong 2015).

Sustainability and futures thinking have become buzzwords in contemporary organisations and some critics doubt the validity of reports published by companies. Although such reports always receive mixed reviews, it is acknowledged by industry experts that sustainable initiatives have significant impacts on organisational futures thinking and ultimate competitiveness. In a recent publication by the World Economic Forum (2018) sustainability and futures thinking at the firm level impacts corporate bottom line. Aviva's sustainable initiatives such as policies on human rights, health and safety of employees, and investors stewardship, have paved the way for it to be a model company with convincing track record on actualising competitive future outcomes.

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