

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SQUADS STRUCTURE IN THE COMPANY

ALPHA: A CASE STUDY

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1 Case presentation

The company Alpha is an organization created in 2018 focused on the area of education, where through partnerships with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), activities that support the development of teaching in the Distance Education modality are carried out. Alpha currently operates 15 HEIs in different states across the country, with more than 150 courses offered and 12 thousand students.

To carry out these activities, the alpha company is divided into nine business areas that are integrated with the peer areas of each of its clients. The alpha company's business areas are divided into: Market Intelligence, Commercial, Marketing, Financial, Academic, Academic Registration, Student Relations, IT and Support and Implementation.

At the beginning of its operation, each business area built with each client, within the scope of the project, the operation model to be carried out at the HEI, however, as the operation progressed, it was found that there were many themes that generated an impact on the other areas of the business and, in addition, there was noise in communication between company and client, causing strain on the partnership relationship. Given this scenario, aiming to improve communication, Alpha created a Squad to carry out the relationship with the IES representing the other areas of the organization.

The IES relationship Squad is structured with four members, namely Regional Director (responsible for the contract), Support and Implementation Consultant (representing the financial areas, academic registration and student services), Academic Consultant (representing the academic area) and Marketing Consultant (representing market, commercial and marketing intelligence).

All interaction between the company Alpha and the HEIs that make up the partnership is carried out through the HEI Relationship Squad, with this structure being responsible for processing the

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demands coming from each client and driving alignments with each business area, generating integration between areas and greater quality and assertiveness in feedback.

2 Delimitation of the study

This case study will not study the Alpha company as a whole, but rather the process of establishing a Relationship Squad with the IES and the improvements perceived with the structuring of this team.

3 Justification

The corporate world has increasingly invested in forms of work organization that significantly improve the development of their products/deliveries and increase the generation of value for their customers. One of the work methodologies that gained ground in the last decade was the organization of teams into squads.

Squad is an agile structure made up of a multidisciplinary team, which involves the business areas, and is aimed at meeting specific objectives and ensuring integration between processes and means, being complementary to the traditional administrative model, aiming to ensure that deliveries occur in the manner required. expected by the end customer.

One of the pioneering companies that adopted squad work was the Swedish company *Spotify*, which brought together teams from different and complementary areas into cells, in order to ensure that product development has an integrated vision, increasing the quality of delivery to the end customer. From the success of *spotify*, Several companies adopted the squad work model, including the company Alpha.

With the aim of attracting attention to the topic, this case study will present the effects of implementing the squad model in the Alpha company, in order to identify whether the work methodology presented the expected result for its use and for the perception of value for your customers.

4 Problem situation

Since the beginning of its operation, at the end of 2018, the alpha company faced problems with communication and delivery to its customers. These problems often occurred due to the way in which the relationship between the company and HEI was structured, as

that each business area was responsible for alignments and deliveries with related customer areas. However, in the course of these alignments conducted by the business areas, results in actions that go beyond the responsibility of that area and, without verifying the possibility of delivery, commitments were signed. When certain needs overflowed from the commitment made with the client, the other areas reported that they were unable to carry out a certain delivery as agreed, which generated a need to realign with the client or develop a solution to fulfill what was established (generating a new prioritization of demands in business areas).

Therefore, in May 2019, the structuring of a Relationship Squad was designed, made up of members representing the company's areas so that any and all *input* demanded by the customer is managed by this team to align customer expectations and guarantee deliveries in each area.

5 Objective of the study

The objective of this study is to verify whether the implementation of the relationship squad contributed significantly to improving the alignment process and deliveries to customers and reducing gaps between areas in the construction of these deliveries.

6 Research method

The research methodology used in this article is action research. According to Meneses *et. al.* (2019) action research is characterized by the relationship between researcher and subject who seek to solve or understand a certain problem through direct actions. For this reason Vergara (2006, p.49) defines it as "a particular type of participatory research and applied research that involves participatory intervention in social reality."

Action research has the following characteristics, according to Barros and Lehfeld (2007): a)

Relationship between researcher and researched;

b) The object of study is constituted by the social situation and problems of different natures;

c) Action research is aimed at resolving the observed problem; Considering that I followed the process of implementing the relationship Squads with the IES in the company Alpha, I was able to see the change in the way

relationship between the company and its customers, which is why I was involved with the research object of this article.

6 Case description

The company Alpha, since its creation in 2018, has achieved exponential growth, adding partnerships with 12 HEIs at the beginning of 2020 and reaching more than 12 thousand students at the undergraduate and postgraduate level in the distance learning modality.

Due to this growth, the customer relationship model was not being effective, as each area of the company communicated with the peer area of the partner HEI and there was no synergy between the areas, generating numerous noises and a lack of alignment with the strategy. . Therefore, at the end of the first half of 2019, the company Alpha adopted the squad methodology for its relationship with its customers.

According to Kniberg and Ivarson (2012), the squad consists of a self-organized team, having autonomy to organize itself and define its own work model. Kepler and Oliveira (2019) complement that the squad is defined as the grouping of professionals from different areas of the organization in a cell, with the specific objective of collaborating on a certain project which, in the case of the company Alpha, consists of relationships with Educational Institutions Superior partners.

To redesign the customer relationship process at Alpha company, three squads were created, each representing groups of four higher education HEIs. These squads have four members, who represent the key areas, namely: Regional Director, Marketing Consultant (representing MKT and Sales), Support Consultant (representing the areas of operation – financial, academic registration and service) and Academic Consultant (representing the area of teaching and technologies).

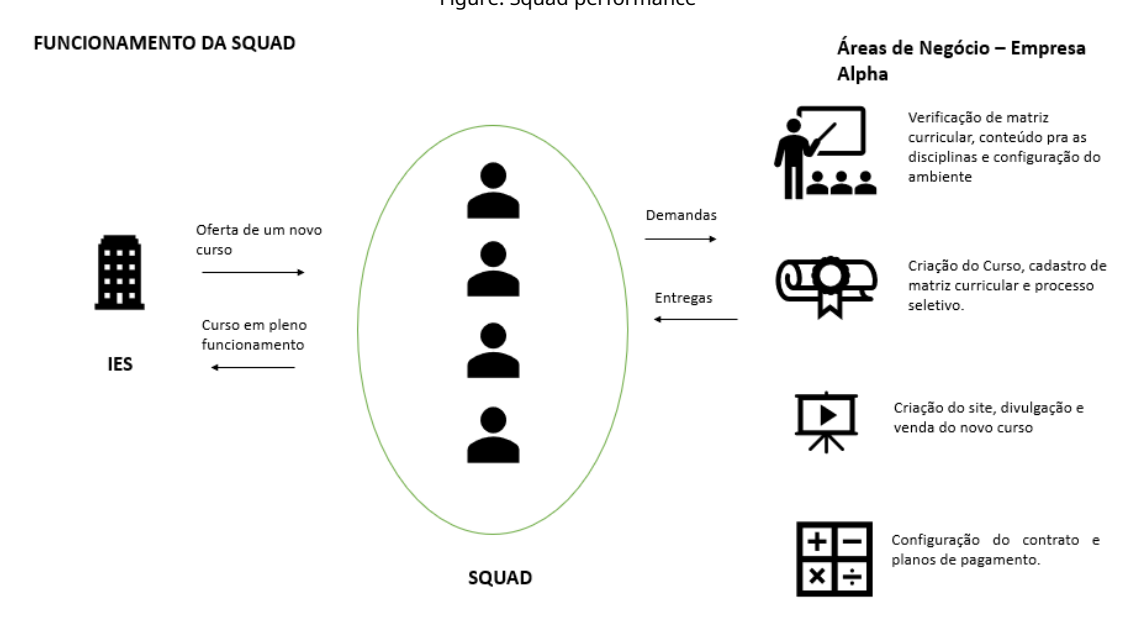
In the structure of these Squads, the Regional Director assumes the role of *Chapter*, what, according to Kniberg and Ivarson (2012), he leads the squad, assuming traditional responsibilities, in addition to being involved in the operation of the squad with activities, which maintains the vision of reality.

Kepler and Oliveita (2019) note that one of the expected actions of a squad is the ability to solve problems, therefore, each member must be trained to do so and it is necessary for each professional to be aware of their commitment and seek to constantly reevaluate their work habits. work. With the company Alpha it was no different. The structuring of these squads was complex in the first months, as these actors had to

have a holistic view of the process to solve problems, being a link between the Alpha company's operations and its customers. Therefore, each member had to immerse themselves in the business in their area to be able to commit to deliveries and be assertive with customers.

After the initial moment of immersion, the squad was ready to act. All demand from Alpha company customers is now received by the Squad, which analyzes the problem/situation and, if necessary, transfers and monitors the activities carried out by the company's areas, ensuring that feedback is given to the customer. as expected. Below is an example of the squad's operating model in the face of a situation, in this case the offering of a new undergraduate course.

Figure: Squad performance



In the example above, the HEI (client) demands that a certain course be offered to the company Alpha. In this context, the squad processes the order and prepares the service plan (actions and schedule), directing it to the Alpha company's business areas. The areas, with the support of the squad, carry out the actions that are their responsibility and return to the squad, which is responsible for checking whether all the steps have been completed, carrying out the tests and delivering to the customer.

In addition to the squad's role in organizing the demands of each HEI, with the implementation of this methodology, an identity was created in the relationship between the alpha company and its clients. As each squad serves four HEIs, the consultants act in a personalized way, as they are able to understand the particularities of each operation and request the areas of *staff* the appropriate customizations, which improved customer satisfaction

customers, as previously it was not possible to know each operation in detail and many problems became recurring.

After implementing the squad model, the Alpha company and its customers noticed an improvement in service, significantly reducing problems due to lack of alignment and quality in deliveries. The Alpha company understands that the work of the squads is not yet finished, and continues to work on improving the adopted model.

7 Case analysis

As contextualized in this study, the first model structured by the company operating directly in key areas with its customers was no longer adequate given the exponential growth in less than a year. Problems related to the alpha company's deliveries and solutions to problem situations became slow and did not meet expectations. The company, given the scenario, invested in adopting the squad methodology as a bet to minimize the problems faced.

With the adoption of the squad model for the relationship with its customers, it was observed that the company Alpha managed to minimize the problems it faced from a multidisciplinary vision, ensuring that activities that span more than one area were monitored in order to provide the delivery of the solution according to the customer's needs.

Final considerations

The use of squads as a work methodology has been consolidating itself in companies over the last decade and, aware of this movement, the company Alpha in 2019 adopted this methodology to solve one of its main problems in the operation: the relationship with its customers and its deliveries.

In addition to improving deliveries to customers, it was observed that with the squad there was an increase in the team's specialization in relation to the particularities of each customer, which provided personalization and an increase in the perception of value by the HEIs that partner with the company Alpha.

Furthermore, it is observed that the implementation of squads in the company Alpha achieved, while preserving its proportions and contexts, the same benefits highlighted by Kniberg and Ivarson (2012) in

model applied to Spotify, demonstrating total convergence between theory and business practice.

Organization by squads is still a recent model in the corporate environment and there is a need to improve the methodology according to the reality of each organization, but effective results can be seen in cases where it has been applied.

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