

Such personally transformative experience not only emphasizes leadership and management skills development, but also favors further employability enhancement.

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## **CARGO CULT**

There is such a concept as a “cargo cult”, which makes an individual or a group of individuals try to reproduce any experience of other individuals, without understanding its principles.

In fact, the cargo cult has existed for as long as our society does. Shamanism and totemism are examples of unconscious imitation of other people’s actions. In a narrow sense, a cargo cult is a religious movement, whose followers believe that rituals will help to receive “benefits” from more advanced civilizations. This is how the term appeared: cult of cargo or cargo cult [1, p. 205].

It must be said that this phenomenon is much more common than it seems, and the victims of the cargo cult can be found in different areas. In business environment, for example, it can happen in the following cases:

1. A young company tries to seem more experienced and “grown-up” by implementing style, structure and attributes of established and larger companies.
2. A Belarusian organization copies the external style of work of similar foreign organization without understanding the key points of its business model, so that rarely helps to achieve success.
3. An established organization does not want to develop and just repeats those actions that led to its success in the past.

Generally, cargo cult in business is an attempt to duplicate the external attributes of something instead of conscious building of effective rational work.

Ukrainian startup Sixa, which appeared in 2015, has become the prime example of the cargo cult in recent years. At the time, the startup was working on a cloud computer that would allow a user to connect to a remote server and run heavy games and complex calculations on their PCs, regardless of capacity. Then, in 2017, the team released their own VR headset, but the year before that PlayStation VR and HTC Vive appeared.

In 2018, cryptocurrencies and blockchains became popular. Sixa immediately announced their own blockchain platform and ICO. All this time, the startup attracted investors and appeared on media platforms. In 2020, it appeared that the founder had disappeared with a \$ 5 million investment. Thus, entrepreneurs fell victim to several cargo cults at once, including the pursuit of fashion, mindless copying of successful strategies, and complete dissonance in causality.

There are various categorizations of cargo cults. For example, Professor Phil Rosenzweig described this problem in his book “The Halo Effect” more than ten years ago. He identified nine types of biases, four of which are most relevant to business [3, p. 150–152]:

- Directly the halo effect. Cognitive distortion, whereby a general idea of an individual or a phenomenon has an impact on its particular features. For example, an outwardly attractive person is perceived to be more reliable, although we do not necessarily know him or her personally.
- The delusion of correlation and causality. We can often mistake any correlation for causation. For example, a company launched a new product in the first quarter and saw a twofold increase in profits in the second. Of course, this can be explained by the realization of a new product, but in reality, this may be due to seasonality, fashion trends, etc.
- The delusion of single explanations. There is research that proves that happy hours on Fridays improve the organizational culture and, therefore, the performance of employees. However, overall performance is influenced not only by teambuilding, but also by many other factors, which at the same time can be correlated with each other. Accordingly, it is difficult to isolate the effect of a single action.
- The delusion of paying attention to winners. Drawing on the experience of other companies, we focus on successful examples without taking into account the failures.

In order to avoid the negative consequences of a cargo cult, when adopting the experience of other organizations, one should be guided by the following principles [2]:

- Clear definition of objectives. A “five why” approach can be applied here, which involves defining the problem and asking the question “why?” five times in a row.
- Search for role models with similar goals. Organizations pursue their goals, and in the process of achieving them, they face obstacles. Of course, sometimes such pleasant attributes as team building, corporate training and a comfortable office help, but it is much more effective to target organizations with similar goals and values and to learn from their experience of achieving these goals rather than simply copy the signs of success.
- Competent learning from others’ mistakes. The point is that it is not enough just to read the story of somebody’s failure in order not to commit your own. It is necessary to analyze the reasons for this failure and draw the right conclusions.

One way to combat the cargo cult is the Deming cycle. The Deming Cycle is a constant circle of regulation of processes and products, and optimization of particular units and facilities.

This circle is also often called the PDCA cycle, which implies 4 stages: planning, doing, checking and acting [4]. Due to constant checks throughout the entire production process, instilling responsibility for quality, as well as continuous audits of the production process, it is possible to identify weaknesses in various processes at the enterprise.

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