



Internal vs. external coöptation

Description

Coöptation (also co-optation) has two common meanings: It may refer to the process of adding members to an elite group at the discretion of members of the body, usually to manage opposition and so maintain the stability of the group. Outsiders are 'co-opted' by being given a degree of power on the grounds of their élite status, specialist knowledge, or potential ability to threaten essential commitments or goals ("formal co-optation").

In a classic 1979 article for Harvard Business Review, consultants John Kotter and Leonard Schlesinger presented co-optation as a "form of manipulation" for dealing with employees who are resistant to new management programs:

Co-opting an individual usually involves giving him or her a desirable role in the design or implementation of the change. Co-opting a group involves giving one of its leaders, or someone it respects, a key role in the design or implementation of a change. This is not a form of participation, however, because the initiators do not want the advice of the co-opted, merely his or her endorsement.

Internal coöptation, on the other hand, involves the process of internalization.

Category

1. General

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