

# What is culture?

[Economics](#), [Globalization](#)



What is culture? Organizations are sometimes faced with having to make a planned changed management program that will attempt to make large-system changes to the culture. This can be very challenging and difficult to manage. When making these changes is imperative to understand what the current large-system and subsystem cultures are. This will give the base foundation to determine the steps necessary to transition the culture to a new cultural norm. We are all familiar with cultural. Culture is your surrounding environment and is made up of behavior, assumptions, attitudes, beliefs, and values that a group of people share. Culture is not considered good or bad but can and will either support or impede progress. People learn culture throughout their lives by receiving good or bad consequences for certain behaviors. People have more of a tendency to repeat behavior that produces good consequences such as rewards and this is what molds there culture. The organizations culture would be all the employee's personalities and life experiences put together in one giant melting pot along with the organizations beliefs, visions, and values.. For example if the majority of the employees are upbeat and personable the organizations culture would be open and sociable. On the other hand if the majority of the employee's attitude was negative the organizations culture would be gloomy and uncomfortable. So how can the organization determine what their current culture is? Diagnosing the current culture: All organizations have a current culture. These cultures for the most part are often in good shape with just a few small flaws. It is imperative to do a diagnosis of the current culture because we are not looking to create a new culture but, asses where necessary improvements are needed and develop a

plane for improvement. The best way to do this is by setting your own perception of the culture aside and hear directly from the employees throughout the organization. You can use a variety of methods to do this such as; interviews, surveys, and focus groups to name a few (Petry, n. d.). Using this methods will allow you to learn; “ what people really think about the organization, what motivates them, what behaviors do they believe are rewarded and punished, what are the “ unspoken rules" that everyone knows" (Petry, n. d.). Another way to gain valuable information is doing an existing interview when employees depart from the organization. It is vital to ask specific questions that will allow you to gain understanding of the employee’s beliefs. Questions should be clear and straight forward such as; “ Is the quality of product/service a high priority or is bad conduct rewarded or tolerated? " (Petry n. d.). As you start to develop a understanding of the organization culture is through the employees eyes you must remember there could be more than one culture in the mix. These are often referred to as subcultures. Diagnosing Cultures Cont.: Identifying the subcultures can prove challenging for organizations but the more you can identify the more effective the delivery of cultural change will be. Although it would be nice to be able to cater to each subculture it is not practical and often found that the costs of such a program would outweigh the return. All organizations have to find a cultural norm at a unique balance for their organization. When determining your culture do not forget to observe your employees for cultural cues such as; rituals, dress, who attends what, and where they sit (Petry, n. d.). Another example of this would be: do the executives and managers join the employees for lunch and how is that interpret this? The

last step in diagnosing your organizations current culture and perhaps the most important is to determine how decisions are being made (Petry, n. d.). This power is dominate in determining the organizations culture. Now that you have all the information you are ready to assess the current culture and create an improvement plan in regards to cultural change. The goal is to develop an organization whose culture is a strategic asset to the business as well as aligns with the priorities of the organization to enhance success.

Elements of Organization Culture: Elements of a strong culture within an organization include; clear mission, respect, solid communication, and superior performance (Arthur, n. d.). When organizations have a clear mission and purpose that all employees understand. This type of culture is strong and can help separate your organization from the competitors.

Another element that creates a strong culture is respect amongst the employees. When management makes the employees feel respected they will stay engaged in their job and perform better. Solid communication is also a vital element in having a strong culture. Many organizations practice the open door policy to ensure quality communication. Solid communication also is crucial for avoiding conflict also. The last element I will discuss is superior performance. The bottom line is this; organizations that have a strong culture, happy employee, and happy managers produce superior results, better quality, and at a faster rate. Communication, respect, solid communication, and superior performance come from a strong culture. As we stated earlier diagnosing your current culture is the first step to understanding your organizations true culture. Then you must decide if this culture best fits your organizations interest and goals. Be familiar with the

elements of your organizations cultures so that you can consciously shape your organizations culture based on your finding. How to change the Cultural Elements: Beings the organization already has an established culture employees will have to unlearn old behaviors, values, and assumptions to learn new ones (Heathfield, n. d.). This means training needs to be implemented so the employees know the new expectations and behaviors they must adhere too. Management must also be supportive of these changes by changing their own behavior and setting good example for the employees to follow. There are additional ways to change the organizations culture such as relearning and reiterating the organizations mission, vision, and values as it pertains to each employees job (Heathfield, n. d.). This will give the employee the understanding of how the desired culture will directly reflect their commitment to their job. Sometimes organizations find it necessary during a culture change to also implement a structure change to form a better alignment (Heathfield, n. d.). This can happen do to a lack of support during the creation of a cultural change and is best for the organizations overall success. Other change that may be necessary is the rewards and recognition program. Beefing up these programs can encourage good behaviors and help make the transition smoother. Remember it is just as important to reward teams or groups as individuals. Conclusion: My recommendations for an organization trying to implement cultural change has five steps; diagnose, unfreeze, reinforce, apply, and measure. We already covered how to diagnose your organizations current culture. It be necessary to create a list containing “ from-to keep" behaviors and other cultural attributes (Excellence to Eminence, n. d.). Define the expected

behaviors and values of the new culture. Unfreeze the old culture by implementing change to align new values and behaviors that are specific to the strategic priorities (Excellence to Eminence, n. d.). The next step is to reinforce the changes. Reinforcing the changes can be done by having a supportive management staff, clear communication, training, updated recruitment process, and new orientation. Now you want to apply the new training and practice the new behaviors by incorporating them into the daily work life. Lastly is to measure your progress which takes you back to step one a new current culture diagnosis. In conclusion I think it is vital to celebrate or acknowledge the success that occurs from the cultural change. Positive reinforcement to your employees helps them strive to reach future goals. Organizations that follow these five steps will have; defined the current and future cultures, successfully shift thinking and behaviors, ensure long term change, achieve results, and monitor progress. References Arthur, L. (n. d.). What are the elements of a strong corporate culture? Retrieve on April 26, 2013 from <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/elements-strong-corporate-culture-15674.html> Excellence to Eminence. (n. d.). Retrieved on April 27, 2013 from <http://www.osu.edu/eminence/E2EResources/423/573/743.html> Heathfield, S. (n. d.). How to change your culture: organizational cultural change. Retrieved on April 26, 2013 from [http://humanresources.about.com/od/organizationalculture/a/culture\\_change\\_2.htm](http://humanresources.about.com/od/organizationalculture/a/culture_change_2.htm) Petry, Ed. (n. d.). Assessing corporate culture. Retrieved on April 26, 2013 from <https://www.webuser.bus.umich.edu/.../Organizational%20Culture/CULTURE%20BO...>