

# Organizational culture compared



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Organizational Culture Compared MANAGEMENT 5590 Organizational culture is an idea in the field of Organizational studies and management which describes the psychology, attitudes, experiences, beliefs and values (personal and cultural values) of an organization. It has been defined as “ the specific collection of values and norms that are shared by people and groups in an organization and that control the way they interact with each other and with stakeholders outside the organization. (Hill and Jones, 2001) This definition continues to explain organizational values, also known as “ beliefs and ideas about what kinds of goals members of an organization should pursue and ideas about the appropriate kinds or standards of behavior organizational members should use to achieve these goals. From organizational values develop organizational norms, guidelines, or expectations that prescribe appropriate kinds of behavior by employees in particular situations and control the behavior of organizational members towards one another. (Hill and Jones, 2001) Organizational culture is not the same as corporate culture. It is wider and deeper concepts, something that an organization ‘ is’ rather than what it ‘ has’.

Corporate culture is the total sum of the values, customs, traditions, and meanings that make a company unique. Corporate culture is often called “ the character of an organization”, since it embodies the vision of the company’s founders. The values of a corporate culture influence the ethical standards within a corporation, as well as managerial behavior. (Montana and Charnov, 2008) To understand organizational culture, it is imperative to first understand culture. Culture can be defined as “ the beliefs, customs, practices, and social behavior of a particular nation or people; a particular

set of attitudes that characterizes a group of people; or a group of people whose shared beliefs and practices identify the particular place, class or time to which they belong” (Encarta). Secondly, one must value the meaning of culture in the work place in order to comprehend its advantages. The ability to interact effectively with members of other cultures often translates into financial gain, increased employment, and better advancement prospects” (Devito 26). The next step in understanding organizational culture is to know the exact definition. Edgar Schein defines it as: A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Nellen).

Schein describes the culture of an organization as consisting of three levels. “ At the fundamental level are the core beliefs and assumptions that members of a culture see as truth” (Cheney, et. al 78). Under this level are the ideas that the system is run by the “ invisible hand,” that it is necessary for the system to grow, and that workers must be supervised. The second level consists of values and behavioral norms. In this section the organization begins to recognize its involvement in the culture; it becomes aware of its culture. Artifacts are the third level of organizational culture.

Artifacts are the portion of the organization that involves the five senses. They are visible and tangible. An example of a culture’s artifact is its building or the dress code. Deal and Kennedy defined organizational culture as the way things get done around here. They measured organizations in respect

of: \* Feedback – quick feedback means an instant response. This could be in monetary terms, but could also be seen in other ways, such as the impact of a great save in a soccer match. \* Risk – represents the degree of uncertainty in the organization's activities.

Using these parameters, they were able to suggest four classifications of organizational culture: \* The Tough-Guy Macho Culture. Feedback is quick and the rewards are high. This often applies to fast moving financial activities such as brokerage, but could also apply to a police force, or athletes competing in team sports. This can be a very stressful culture in which to operate. \* The Work Hard/Play Hard Culture is characterized by few risks being taken, all with rapid feedback. This is typical in large organizations, which strive for high quality customer service. It is often characterized by team meetings, jargon and buzzwords. \* The Bet your Company Culture, where big stakes decisions are taken, but it may be years before the results are known. Typically, these might involve development or exploration projects, which take years to come to fruition, such as oil prospecting or military aviation. \* The Process Culture occurs in organizations where there is little or no feedback. People become bogged down with how things are done not with what is to be achieved. This is often associated with bureaucracies.

While it is easy to criticize these cultures for being overly cautious or bogged down in red tape, they do produce consistent results, which are ideal in, for example, public services. Charles Handy (1985) popularized the 1972 work of Roger Harrison of looking at culture which some scholars have used to link organizational structure to organizational culture. He describes Harrison's <https://assignbuster.com/organizational-culture-compared/>

four types thus: \* a Power Culture which concentrates power among a few. Control radiates from the center like a web. Power and influence spread out from a central figure or group.

Power derives from the top person and personal relationships with that individual matters more than any formal title of position. Power Cultures have few rules and little bureaucracy; swift decisions can ensue. \* In a Role Culture, people have clearly delegated authorities within a highly defined structure. Typically, these organizations form hierarchical bureaucracies. Power derives from a person's position and little scope exists for expert power. Controlled by procedures, roles descriptions and authority definitions. Predictable and consistent systems and procedures are highly valued. By contrast, in a Task Culture, teams are formed to solve particular problems. Power derives from expertise as long as a team requires expertise. These cultures often feature the multiple reporting lines of a matrix structure. It is all a small team approach, who are highly skilled and specialist in their own markets of experience. \* A Person Culture exists where all individuals believe themselves superior to the organization. Survival can become difficult for such organizations, since the concept of an organization suggests that a group of like-minded individuals pursue the organizational goals.

Some professional partnerships can operate as person cultures, because each partner brings a particular expertise and clientele to the firm. Writers from Critical management studies have tended to express skepticism about the functionalist and unitary views of culture put forward by mainstream management thinkers. While not necessarily denying that organizations are cultural phenomena, they would stress the ways in which cultural

assumptions can stifle dissent and reproduce management propaganda and ideology.

After all, it would be naive to believe that a single culture exists in all organizations, or that cultural engineering will reflect the interests of all stakeholders within an organization. In any case, Parker has suggested that many of the assumptions of those putting forward theories of organizational culture are not new. They reflect a long-standing tension between cultural and structural (or informal and formal) versions of what organizations are. Further, it is perfectly reasonable to suggest that complex organizations might have many cultures, and that such sub-cultures might overlap and contradict each other.

The neat typologies of cultural forms found in textbooks rarely acknowledge such complexities, or the various economic contradictions that exist in capitalist organizations. One of the strongest and widely recognized criticisms of theories that attempt to categorize or ‘pigeonhole’ organizational culture is that put forward by Linda Smircich. She uses the metaphor of a plant root to represent culture, describing that it drives organizations rather than vice versa. Organizations are the product of organizational culture, we are unaware of how it shapes behavior and interaction (also recognized through Schein's (2002) underlying assumptions) and so how can we categorize it and define what it is? Bibliography Charles W. L. Hill, and Gareth R. Jones, (2001) Strategic Management. Houghton Mifflin. Montana, P. , and Charnov, B. (2008) Management (4th ed. ), Barrons Educational Series, Hauppauge: NY Cheney, George, et. al. Organizational Communication in an Age of Globalization: Issues, Reflections, Practices.

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