

# Person organization fit



Introduction This week, we discuss how the notion of person-organization fit may be recast from a sense-making perspective. We were also asked to identify 3 to 5 organizational culture profile items from a list created by Reilly, Chatham and Caldwell, (1991), and describe experiences that are consistent with those profile elements, as well as describe how we believe individuals in the organization played a role in the development of those cultural attributes.

Person-organization Fit and Sense-Making To define person-organization fit can be complex, as per my understanding of Reilly et al's article (1991), though I might resolve to use one basic explanation from the article for the basis of my discussion: the congruence of a person's characteristics (values, beliefs, work abilities, ambitions) to the characteristics perceived of an organization.

Recognizing that large, formal organizations like Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), for which I work, employs thousands of people with diverse characteristics, sense-making becomes a fundamental role for leaders to bring employees together to adopt common or shared key characteristics required of the organization to achieve its goals. I looked for support of this postulation from articles by Smircich and Morgan (1982) and Pfeffer (2005). The actions and utterances of leaders frame and shape the context of action in such a way that the members of that context are able to use the meaning thus created as a point of reference for their own action and understanding of the situation" (Smircich and Morgan (1982, p. 261). Moreover, " the key challenge for a leader is to manage meaning in such a way that individuals orient themselves to the achievement of desirable ends" (Smircich and

Morgan, 1982, p. 62). Pee (2005) quotes Karl Wick, a psychologist and key researcher in sense-making and organizations, and his seven characteristics of sense-making, of which, identity construction, is listed as first, and therefore, assumed to be central to the purpose of sense-making in organizations.

"(W)ho people think they are in their context shapes what they enact and how they interpret events" (Pee, 2005, p. 38).

In an article search for evidence beyond this module's learning resources, Challenger and Union (2013) also allude to identity construction as a way leaders frame the meaning of work by employees by focusing on task identity and task significance. A leader may redefine the meaningfulness of work by emphasizing the relationships between the work that an employee does and the important organizational outcomes" (Challenger and Union, 2013, p. 56). Leaders can support their organization to achieve its goals by influencing employees' understanding of situations so that employees might identify what characteristics need to be adopted for success in achieving organizational goals. Or, leaders may positively reinforce pre-existing required characteristics in their employees; to remind them of the value they have in supporting the organization to achieve its goals.

Organizational Culture Profile (COP) Items Before I could identify 3 to 5 COP items within VS., I found myself with challenged to resolve whether VS. had one culture, a subculture within a culture, or two distinct cultures within it. As a program manager of patient transition services between acute care settings and community, or home care, settings, I recognize that my Job entails regular facilitation between two different worlds within one

organization. Acute care, or hospital, settings are rigid and aggressive, with quick decisions made on the spot.

The culture is very demanding of employees and managers to meet daily patient discharge quotas, length of stay time frames, requiring them to pay close attention to detail and be highly orientated to achievement. Whereas community settings demonstrate more tolerance, are easy going, calm and are flexible. Finally, having recognized that at least two subcultures exist in VS., I resolved to identify COP items that both acute care and community settings share, speaking to one overall culture of the organization.

From this overall culture within VS., I observe 3 COP items from Reilly et al's list in action: being team oriented (no. 15), being people oriented (no. 18) and having a clear guiding philosophy (no. 52). My experiences and observations can be summarized as describing the organization, having a new chief operating officer at the helm, to be in a stage of learning to adopt these newly identified attributes and understanding how these attributes are personified within the organization. Team orientation.

Almost all key decisions, initiatives, projects and daily work I experience at VGA is team oriented. When patients are ready to leave the hospitals, it is clear that the interdependence between administrators, physicians, nurses, social workers and therapists is based on the shared goal to develop a plan for safe and timely transition of patients back to their homes. Sometimes, personal goals or differences in opinion about what is safe or timely gets in the way of the team working together to develop a plan that meets most primary stakeholders' interests.

However, my staff often remind themselves and the rest of the care team of the goals and the importance to work together to form a solution. It's my job to impress upon y staff this key attribute for effective discharge planning. How my staff adopts this key attribute is not by simply telling them that team orientation is important, but by asking them to reflect on their own experiences when they have participated in plans that did not involve the team versus inclusive of the team. People orientation. Vic's goals are founded by the principle of " People First".

Applying this principle to the organization's strategic framework, mission and goals keeps the values of the employees and patients at the forefront of setting direction. In a recent all staff forum, employees kept leaders accountable to this attribute by questioning why the implementation of the 37.5 hour work week schedules did not involve staff during planning. Leaders' answers during the forum was corporate, not entirely satisfying to staff, but leaders acknowledged the lesson learned and to be brought forward in future large-scale organizational changes.