

Assessing corporate culture

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This paper will assess the corporate culture of Walt Disney, addressing the background of the organization, training and teaching, stories, legends and myths associated with the company, philosophy, values, mission statement and the organizational goals of the company.

The Disney Brothers Studios was founded by Walt and Roy Disney in October of 1923. As the brothers increased their reach in the entertainment market, this small studio evolved into the corporate giant known today as the Walt Disney Company which has interests in entertainment and media enterprises including Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, The Walt Disney Studios, ABC, Inc., ESPN, Disney Channel, Disney Stores, television and radio stations and Internet websites.

" Fifty years ago, Walt Disney passed down three key precepts that still hold true today: tell a great story, tell it with great characters and push the technological barriers" (Hightower, 1993 p. 54). This statement by the Disney founder still drives the philosophy for Disney's studio entertainment and parks and resorts business segments.

In reviewing the vast corporation of the Walt Disney Company and all that it has to offer, one profound statement made by Walt Disney himself comes to the forefront, " I only hope that we don't lose sight of one thing - that it was all started by a mouse" (Walt, n. d.). This statement suggests that the company has a strong focus to continually guide them in the way of the original idea of the company. Even as it watches the changes taking place in society and adapts to the new technologies and innovations, the Walt Disney Company has been able to implement diverse strategies for its growth and prosperity.

The Walt Disney Company's organizational culture, or "the basic pattern of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs considered the correct way of thinking about and acting on problems and opportunities facing the organization" (University, 2002, p. 448) is shown in part by their in-depth employee education, their manufacturers' code of conduct and their environmental commitment.

The Walt Disney Company's mission statement is: "To make people happy." Although the statement is only a one-liner it is supported by a set of values setting the performance standards and directs the implementation of the mission. Those values are: no cynicism; nurturing and promulgation of "wholesome American values"; creativity, dreams and imagination; fanatical attention to consistency and detail; and preservation and control of the Walt Disney Company "magic".

The Walt Disney Company also has strong standards which the company feels that are imperative to make sure the Disney name, vision and company has superior record with the community. This is shown in their Code of Conduct for Manufacturers ("Code", n. d.), which specifies: a standard of excellence in every aspect of our business and in every corner of the world; ethical and responsible conduct in all of our operations; respect for the rights of individuals; and respect for the environment; manufacturers will not use child labor; manufacturers will treat each employee with dignity and respect.

The Walt Disney Company also takes great pride in being environmentally conscience. The company's environmental statement is "the attitude and commitment to support responsible environmental initiatives, and that

commitment begins with individual action" ("DisneyHAND - Environmentalism").

In reviewing the Walt Disney Company, whether it be at Disney itself, in a Disney store or visiting their informative website, a person finds statements such as "Nurturing a Creative Culture", "Innovation: Bringing creativity to life" and "Disney Difference." These slogans and sayings reinforce the Walt Disney Company's goal to have a positive effect on all types of customers that they deal with, whether it is store customers, workers, shareholders, investors, manufacturers, etc.

The Walt Disney Company's culture has taken into consideration globalization, the changing workforce, implications for organizational behavior and employment relationships, all which are crucial to the success of a healthy company. The Walt Disney Company has enterprises in several countries and deals with the changing workforce and emerging employment relationships on a daily basis. They are also guided by outlined missions in all areas of the company as well as being proactive on several issues. This practice keeps them continually growing as a company.

Many of the core values implemented by Walt and Roy Disney in 1928 still stand strong today. Walt and Roy understood that innovation was the key to success and fostered a culture that allowed and encouraged controlled risk taking. (Lynch) Over the years, that philosophy has evolved into a rather simplistic, yet highly successful model that allows the company to continuously strengthen its bottom-line through creative and innovative processes. The company defines its four phase model in the following steps:

1. Define the Culture

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2. Align the Issues

3. Design the Process

4. Redefine the Product or Service

The Walt Disney Company workforce includes cast members, or the employees who work in its theme parks, hotels, shops and restaurants. The Walt Disney Company's commitment to customer service is the basis for employees' formal training through Disney University, where introductory classes focus on gaining knowledge and understanding of the Walt Disney Company's goals, traditions and operational philosophies (Miller, 1992 p. 191). In addition, role models take the place of formal company operating procedures as peers teach job skills to new hires, thereby personalizing the position to company policies and procedures (Miller, 1992 p. 192). Partly due to this training, the Walt Disney Company does an amazing job empowering each and every one of their approximately 50, 000 employees and encourages them to share their ideas and have involvement with company decisions. Employees are taught in early training sessions to understand (1) who you are and what are your core competencies, (2) what you do and how you deliver your product, and (3) where you are going via your goals and strategies. Disney employees are encouraged to " get out of the box, toss it aside, and start with pure, fresh, undiluted ideas".

Miller (1992) highlighted the importance the Walt Disney Company places on rewarding individual contributions through its recognition and appreciation programs:

1. The Walt Disney Company rewards length of service milestones through luncheons, gifts and banquets;

2. Employees can also nominate their peers for the quarterly spirit of Disney award. Based on the number of times they have received the award, winners get either a silver castle for their nametag or a gold pin and dinner party with all winners getting recognition in the employee newsletter (p. 193).

The work environment behind the scenes at The Disney Stores is very different from the stores themselves, which are decorated with artwork, three-dimensional characters and have Disney videos playing throughout the day. Once you leave the "stage", you will find a very different atmosphere with 12 foot shelving units holding products and decorations not presently on-stage; hanger-rods arranged along all wall spaces, even above the restroom's doors; boxes of unprocessed shipments and bags of plush toys reaching even above the shelving units. The employee area is typically a five or six foot desk and small lockers. There is a table with a microwave oven on one corner with a small refrigerator below, barely leaving enough table space to open up training manuals. The staff use lockers to store their purse or wallet, coat, and other items brought into the store. While this work environment may seem harsh, the Walt Disney Company's emphasis is on the customer and the cast members' focus should be on the customers in the store, rather than on the furnishings or lack thereof in the backroom of the store.

One reason the Walt Disney Company is so successful is that they believe in successful failures. Walt Disney once said "I have made some bad ones (mistakes). But fortunately the successes have come along fast enough to cover up the mistakes" and "When you go to bat as much as I do, you're bound to get a good average." (Lynch)

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Today the Walt Disney Company has a solid understanding that " good leadership impacts cast experience, impacts guest experience, and impacts bottom-line success," (Edgington) Current management " focuses on the bottom line by not focusing on the bottom line, as evident by the Walt Disney Company 's senior management spending 70 percent of its time with strategic planning and evaluation."

The Walt Disney Company is divided into four integrated and well-connected business segments: studio entertainment, parks and resorts, consumer products and media networks (Disney Online - Company Overview, 2005).

The organization values of telling timeless and engaging stories using innovation guides product development and can be found in all Disney brands (Disney Online - Culture, 2005) by seeking out creative, team-oriented people to develop innovative and quality products that tell timeless and engaging stories. Because of the innovation and attitude of the Walt Disney Company's development division, creative people want to work for the Walt Disney Company because their ideas materialize into products and services that make people happy (Hightower, 1993 p. 55).

The Walt Disney Company's name continues to be synonymous with animation. The animation approaches of storyboarding, setting up schools for animators, and promoting stable animated characters have been supported by the Walt Disney Company's innovative animation technological breakthroughs (Jackson, 1996 p. 50). The animation idea and its supporting technology have also received backing by management through budgeting and scheduling of resources (Hightower, 1993 p. 55).

Hightower (2003) identified the painstaking method of creating timeless and

engaging animated films known as storyboarding:

" Storyboarding is process of visualizing the story using hundreds of rough sketches. During the project, the story is reworked through several storyboard meetings, while always maintaining the simplicity, unity and emotional impact of the original story idea. Part of this process includes the artist creating several drawings just to find one that can be used in the development of the story (p. 55).

The Walt Disney Company's imagineering (R; D) department uses the Blue Sky Phase brainstorming process when developing attractions for the Walt Disney Company's theme parks. Brainstorming sessions are attended from imangineers from many disciplines and there is an uninhibited exchange of ideas (Hightower, 1993 p. 55). Key individuals are permanently assigned to entire project to ensure that the finished product is consistent with the initial concept (Hightower, 1993 p. 55). The objective is for the theme park attraction to tell a story through adventures and dreams (Hightower, 1993 p. 55).

The Walt Disney Company's formal statements suggest that the corporation has spent considerable time reviewing and researching future forecasts, cultures and other successful companies. Using the information obtained from their research and following the mission statements and values set down by Walt and Roy Disney in 1928, the Walt Disney Company has continued to move forward, expand and continue to be successful.

In regard to its employees and company reputation, Fortune Magazine and its survey partner, Hay Group, asked 10, 000 top managers at 582 companies (the largest by revenues in each sector) to rank companies by <https://assignbuster.com/assessing-corporate-culture/>

corporate reputation, by industry, using eight criteria: Innovation, Financial Soundness, Use of Corporate Assets, Long-term investment, People Management, Quality of Management, Social responsibility, and Quality of Products/Services. Disney lead the entertainment sector, for the second year in a row. (Disney Online - Careers, 2005).

In summary, the Walt Disney Company appears to be a well organized, innovative and forward thinking corporation that follows through on Walt and Roy Disney's vision as expressed by them when they founded the company in 1928.

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