

ASPECTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

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In the last twenty years world-wide companies tried to adapt their organizational culture to the external environment and to the new challenges. Recent crises put to the test organizational culture, in the sense that only companies with a strong and versatile culture resisted financially and psychological on international markets. The biggest treat for today's organizations is remaining the same.

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In the last twenty years world-wide companies tried to adapt their organizational culture to the external environment and to the new challenges. Recent crises put to the test organizational culture, in the sense that only companies with a strong and versatile culture resisted financially and psychological on international markets. To give a significant example, in our opinion, take the differential culture of General Motors and Toyota. GM is confronting great financial and organizational problems while Toyota is still going on the market. It is known that Toyota has an old and very consolidate organizational culture and it succeeded to create a philosophy called “toyotism”, while GM neglected this aspect for many years. The biggest treat for today's organizations is remaining the same.

To illustrate this fact I will take the following example: from the biggest 100 companies of the 90's today only 16 are still on the market. In a top of the Fortune magazine from 500 important companies today only 25 are still included as being important and representative.

These dramatic changes in the internal environment of the organizations are explainable if we consider the transfer from industrial economy to the informational economy. For the first time in 1991 companies invest more in high-tech technologies and communications rather than in primary sectors such as mining, agriculture, constructions etc

The theory that we are in the informational economy stage is revealed by the fact that in the last twenty years companies produced more information and innovation than in the last 5000 years. A weekly edition of the New York Times or of the Herald Tribune contains more information that could accumulate a person in the XVII century in a lifetime.

1. Organizational culture – part of the managerial science

Every organization has a culture, which reflects its history, managerial approach, managerial styles, attitude versus risk, relationship with competition, suppliers, and, of course, employees. Organizational culture is about human resource, because founders, CEO's and employees are humans.

If we try to define what is organizational culture we could say that represents a system of symbols, traditions, habits, values and organizational behavior shared by the company's members.

At the beginning of the 80's researchers began to be interested in organizational culture. This was one of the fields where theoreticians were more aware than the practitioners about the importance of the organizational culture in the life of companies and about how it can change in better or in worse their performances. The reason that practitioners ignored till then organizational culture is

very simple, they consider it to be a safe value, a state of mind that exists but we are not entirely aware of until somebody asks you about it or you must compare your culture with a different one. E. Schein identified three levels on culture's manifestation:

-First level includes artifacts- this level is represented by symbols and tangible products such as architecture, design, clothes, technology, habits, myths, history etc. The wealth of an organization reflects and influences its organizational culture.

-Habits and values adopted and implemented by the employees. Agreements, objectives, rules, ethical behavior, all these are developed in the internal environment of the companies. These represent the line between good and rung, guiding the organization. Rules could be transformed formal in laws and informal in social behavior.

-Basically presumptions about life and human behavior- represent the deepest level. It contains the employee's beliefs, convictions, and behavior in the organization. Although there are intangible and abstract there are the most important.

Trough culture organizations try to express their continuity in time and to obtain legitimacy in the field and on the market. It's a mix between economic organization- tangible values and culture-intangible values.

A first approach of organizational culture in management belongs to T. Peters and R. Waterman in their book "*In Search of Excellence*", they illustrate best the connection between organizational culture and managerial work.

They consider organizational culture "as a result of managerial efforts in orientate employees towards excellence". An organization can express very well trough past achievements. Every company is created to serve a goal, purpose trough human resources. These goals are more important than all other company's components because they dictate the organizational structure.

There are considered to be the fundamentals of work activities, respectively to the responsibilities associated to work. The organization's goals are influenced by public opinion, tax payers and clients. If does not exist demand on the market then the organization could not exist. This means that all organizations need to gain legitimacy, material and human resources, permanent customers, constant relationships, stability and organizational values. For productive organizations is very important the proportion between expenses and results and the economic effect, if the production is profitable or not.

The value's system represents an ensemble of interdependent ideals and it is characterized by a coherency that justifies every constituent component of the organization in comparison with others. It serves as a guide and evaluation system.

Values are shared by individuals or by groups, but there are more than just inputs. There resemble with attitudes and with elements of personality. These attitudes have their origins in the employee's subconscious and after that are implemented in the organization's culture.

D. Pemartin and J. Legres set some professional values in six steps:

-Wage- money are considered to be an essential reason of conduct

-Freedom or autonomy- independence and the desire of not being part of a hierarchy.

-The reputation- the need of admiration, the attributes of power.

-Stability – to obtain it people accept tasks and jobs that don't like establishing a negative environment.

-Organizing- in the first place are planning, discipline, rules.

-Solving problems- because of the need to be remarked the employees try to solve problems more efficiently.

Changing organizational culture presume changing organization's members mentality and instrumental values. The need for change could be caused by low performance or new adopted strategies, reduced capacity of adaptation to the external challenges etc.

2. Organizational Culture Typologies

In every field of research we need schematization and classifications. The classification operations presume utilization of criteria and leads to an established order by the researcher. Organizational culture is a complex phenomenon and that's why we have to apply typological analyze to its main variations. Establishing a typology of the organizational culture allows us to choose better from such diversity. Numerous authors tried to establish models or typologies of organizational cultures.

Time has a crucial role in a culture of a community and in business as well. Depending on time factor, that is the way how organizations project time, at least two ways of cultures can be met:

-monochronic culture, where time is perceived in a linear way (the absolute time), as a way that lies from past, through present to future, which is segmented (on stages) and tangible (after calendar). This culture is specific to North European organizations and to North America, where can be met a strict schedule of activities, promptness in tasks and activities' achievement, punctuality in business relations, perseverance and consistency in goal achievement.

-polychronic culture, has a different perspective on time (the relative time), pertaining to his flowing, related to events' development and life facts. Two or more activities are performed simultaneously, in competition or alternatively. Events' development is more likely determined by the imperative of the moments, rather than a preset plan. Organizations from Latin America or Middle East offer a lot of examples, emphasizing the involvement of people and business' executions rather than planning. A great importance have the preservation and development of interpersonal relations, the adjustment to the general culture climate, to the foreign environment, the fulfillment of goals of the involved parts, the respect of partner's "image" and the assurance of cordial relations.

Based on organization's structure, in literature there were delimited three types of cultures:

-Bureaucratic culture - characterized by a no clear style, based mainly on approved norms and procedures. This culture assumes a rigid, centralized hierarchy. This type exists in every country and brings a lot of discomforts.

-Administrative culture – that is production-oriented. It is the culture of organizations sensitive to change and very adaptive to change.

-Technical culture - it is typical to industrial organizations, based on "know-how".¹¹⁴

3. Organizational Culture in Romanian companies

An attempt to identify some characteristics of organizational culture in Romanian companies can be risky and mainly empirical. Any analysis must take into consideration the different forms of ownership. However, according to a study of Human Synergistics Romania¹¹⁵, three main traits were spotted out: exaggerate competitiveness, conventionalism, and self-development.

Exaggerate competitiveness. Everything is turning around win – loose concept. People constantly try to prove that they are better than their colleagues, not only to fulfill organization's goals. This need to prove often exceeds the space of primordial task and can be found in every situation, no matter how insignificant it is. Every idea, once expressed, becomes sacrosanct, and people are willing to fight for it. When loose the dispute, Romanians prefer to retreat instead of recognizing the defeat.

Conventionalism. Even looks like a paradox, Romanian companies seem to have a fair doze of conventionalism that is the inclination for respect, even apparently, of rules and procedures. This inclination is a reaction of people in front of increased aggressiveness of organization and

114 Hofstede Geert (2001), *Culture's consequences*, 2nd edition, Thousand Oaks, CA:Sage

115 Human Synergistics Romania (2006), *Cultura organizationala in companiile romanesti, analize si tendinte*

represents a simple escape gate from individual responsibility. Rules become more important than ideas as is emphasized in the following statement: “This is a brilliant idea; unfortunately, we have a rule that ban it”. Lack of conventionalism, doesn’t necessarily mean, as we can be tempted to consider, the constant brake of rules, but the recognition of their role in helping work, and when they don’t, the rules must be changed.

Self – development. This is a more paradox dimension. Romanian companies seem have a high level of future orientation, towards quality and creativity. This characteristic doesn’t derive only from proverbial Romanian capacity of “setting free from difficulties”, but also from a sincere concern of organization’s members for doing a quality job. This tendency, manifested in all top-companies, shows how important is organizational culture and internal environment in building-up an appropriate and capable work practice in Romania.

A fundamental differentiation between work environment from Romanian organizations and from western countries is the management system. In Romania, the organizational culture seems to be relationship-centered, rather than task-center, as it is outside. Another serious problem of Romanian managers is their difficulty to delegate, and if they succeed to do it, rarely refrain themselves from over controlling the delegate, causing lack of motivation.

Organizational culture represents the most important factor in companies’ development, outrunning national culture and specific cultures such as monochronic or polychronic cultures. Organizational culture represents a mix of inputs from founders, managers, employees and collaborators. In Romania, the organizational culture must experience a significant adjustment in order to meet the needs of organizations’ members.

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