

Features of Different Cultures Existing in Various Types of Organizations

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Abstract

Organization culture represents the personality of an organization. The culture of the organization is a set of postulates concerning the collective action, admitted and expressed through symbols that have a value which the members of the company believe in, accept and respect.

Key words: *organization culture, organization behaviour, competitiveness*

The organization culture requires major attention, fact justified by its functions and importance in the contemporary company. First, we have to mention that the modern company is mainly based on human resources, on employees, and secondly, on capital and equipment.

The nature of competition has changed in time. The statistical competition, when the success or the failure were determined by the endowment with factors of production, has become a dynamic competition whose main factors are: the technological progress, the new openings of the markets and the modern methods of management.

Many researchers have defined the term of organization culture, trying to illustrate its true nature. We are going to underline some representative definitions:

- R.Griffin¹ considers culture to be a set of values, belonging to an organization, which helps its members to understand their aim, the way of action and what is important for them;
- Stanley Davis² considers the organization culture an assembly of values and beliefs shared by the staff of an organization having certain meanings, and which offer them rules for an accepted behaviour;
- Gary Johns³ considers that, formally, the organization culture consists in beliefs, values and hypothesis shared within an organization;
- Geert Hofstede defines culture as “the mental collective programming that distinguishes the members of an organization from the members of another organization.”⁴

¹ Griffin, R., *Management*, Houston Miflin Co., 1990, pag. 20

² Davis, S., *Managing Corporate Culture*, Harper & Row Publishers, 1984, pag. 38

³ Johns, G., *Comportament organizațional*, Editura Economică, București, 1998

⁴ Hofstede, G., *Managementul structurilor multiculturale*, Editura Economică, București, 1996

Hofstede considers that there are three levels of the mental programming: the universal level, the collective level and the individual level. The collective level lies on the basis of the mental programming.

The organization cultures are grouped in many categories according to certain *criteria* such as:

- the configuration of culture;
- the contribution to the company performance;
- the assumed risk level;
- the rapid response to changes;
- the perspective upon time, and so on.

According to the *configuration of culture and the values which lie on the basis of the organization structure*, four types of organization culture can be identified⁵:

1. *The role-type culture* is represented by a Greek temple. The columns are the functions and the divisions of an organization founded on roles.

The role of coordination is assigned to a limited group from the management staff. The authority does not depend on the manager's personal skills but on his status in the chain of command.

2. *The person-type culture* – the image of this culture is a conglomerate of distinct “stars” gathered in a circle.

Unlike the other types of organization cultures in which the employee is subordinated to the organization and contributes to the accomplishment of its objectives, within the person type culture, professionals and their individual aims represent the real nature of organization.

3. *The power-type culture* is represented as a spider web, its center indicating the source of power.

This type of organization responds rapidly to the changes that take place in society. The increase in the number employees within organization creates problems, because it is quite difficult to coordinate their activity on the basis of only one person's control.

4. *The web-type culture* – the image of culture is a web. Power is found at the web lines crossings, being focused on knots.

The organization is a web of assignments, each unit is independent, but all of them have a common strategy. Within such a culture, the management is seen from the perspective of successive challenges what implies finding solutions.

The role or the “temple” type culture is specific to big companies with formal, classical, bureaucratic and well-organized structures as the national companies, local administrations.

In this respect, the organization gives priority to the distribution of distinct and formal roles to the managers and staff members.

An organizational, formal, structure set-up rigorously and controlled by administrative means is considered to be the main condition of the organization performance.

The features of this type of culture are:

- the existence of small culture corresponding to the specialized small divisions of the company;

⁵ Harrison, R., *Organization Culture and Quality of Service*, Association for Management Education and Development, London, 1987.

- the balanced practice of the positive and the negative motivation;
- the low level of rewards;
- the tendency to punish the innovation, for not respecting the rules, or to ignore it;
- a quiet organizational environment, favorable to the persons that are going to specialize;
- a slow response into a changing environment.

The person or the “swarm” type culture is specific to small organizations that offer specialized services, partnerships between lawyers, doctors, business counselors, artists’ associations, etc.

The features of the person type culture are:

- the emphasis on the employees’ ability to get involved in work and on capitalization their initiative;
- the high orientation towards the client ;
- the appreciation of close and amiable relationships;
- the consideration of the members organization as individuals;
- the insufficient power of the organization to impose common objectives to its members.

The power or the “spider web” type culture is specific to small entrepreneurial organizations, to commercial companies, to union and political organizations, and so on.

This type of culture has the following features:

- the organization gives priority to relationships of power not only within it, but also in relations with the business environment;
- the organization structure has a hierarchical character being controlled administratively and operationally by its elite;
- the normative system of the organization is limited, the analytical information, the relationships are less important, the verbal communication is preferred to the written one;
- the prevailing practice of the negative motivation;
- a high flexibility, the ability to adapt to the changes of the environment;
- a severe organization environment having as a result a big labour turnover.

The web type culture is specific to the companies with high creative activities, from the research-development, designing field, which have a matrix structure.

The web type culture is defined by:

- the paternal role of the organization, having as the main aim the ensurance of an adequate environment for relationships development and for a mutual exchange between members;
- the harmonization of the individual objectives with the group ones and with the general objectives of the organization;
- the flexibility and the adaptability, being efficient in case of permanent changes;
- the practice of the positive motivation;
- the chance of a rapid mobilization of sources, but if the number of employees increases, this type of culture changes in a “power” or “role” type.

The next chart synthesizes the features of the main types of organization cultures, illustrating the possibility to make a comparison between them.

Table 1. The defining elements of the organization culture types

Defining Elements	Types of cultures			
	Type “Temple”	Type “Spider Web”	Type “Swarm”	Type “Web”
Key Element	Professional Specialization	Power	Personality	Knots Web
Opening towards Outside	High	Low	Low	High
Dynamism	Stressed	Unstressed	Stressed	Stressed
Prevailing Authority	Formal	Formal	Informal	Formal
Motivation	Balanced Positive - Negative	Negative Prevailing	Positive Prevailing	Positive Prevailing
Organization Environment	Quiet	Tensed	Tensed	Quiet
The Contribution to the Organization Performance	High	High	Low	High
The Competence area	Professional Specializations	The achievement of work tasks	The Authority of Competence	Hierarchical authority vs. Functional competence

The organization culture has a considerable impact on the function and performance of the company, and facilitates the prevention of the illicit organization demeanour.

The high influence of the organization culture on the organization performance leads to a new way of conceiving the organization and of acting inside and outside the organization environment.

In a world where the environment is continuously changing, culture helps the company to evolve or, on the contrary, as shows the detailed plans from below.

Training – increasing productivity. Man has become the main resource of the modern company. Thus, the investments for ensuring the staff’s involvement in the formation and training programs lead to the staff training and to the increase in productivity. The web-type culture, specific to the companies from research-development field and to the ones with creative activities, and also the person-type culture, that offers specialized services, are cultures oriented towards results, being aware of the importance of the specialists’ contribution to achieving the assumed objectives.

Making each employee responsible. It supposes the practice of investing with commitments, staff’s responsibility, creating the feeling of identity, harmonizing the individual interest with the general one of the company. The setting up of half independent teams, the intensification of the dialogue between groups, harmonizing the work relationships and the development of the employer-trade union partnership, the consolidation of teams and solving the conflicts have as a result the increase of work efficiency at the individual level, and at the same time, the achievement of the objectives at the organization level.

Assuring an open-close system. The companies are open systems in the sense of their intensive reciprocal exchanges with external environment and, at the same time, their ability to achieve the competition with companies from similar fields, which creates an organization environment favorable to new employees' rapid integration. In close type systems, the competition takes place at the internal organization level, the new employees' integration is rather difficult, and this affects the results of the company.

Respecting the ethics in business. Ethics presents a real interest due to its implications. Management practice according to the ethical norms requires the achievement of a balance between the financial and social interests of the company. The values of the company and also the respect for clients, employees, loyalty for business partners are defining elements of the managerial ethics.

Capitalization of the innovative potential of the company. The innovation is a major factor of competitiveness and economic development, within the company. Shortening the durability of products and the globalization of the economic life determine the increase in the research-development activity in companies.

Creating a positive image of the company. A favorable image of the company, created by a legal, real, fair advertising, by a process sustained by public relations, by products and services quality, represents an essential element of a competitive company. In the field of products and services, quality is compulsory: implanting an organization culture oriented towards the client, making a market-report concerning client expectations and satisfaction, development of a commercial system quality.

Making the company responsible in the social field. The accomplishment of the requirements specific to the labour protection, to cultural-artistic activities, to organizing holidays, to assurances and donations leads to the improvement of staff's work-living conditions and to a positive motivation and concentration on work.

The most relevant reasons that justify the rise of theoreticians and managers' interest in the study of the organization culture, would be the following:

1. *Studying the organization culture is a modality of evaluating the staff* without using highly sophisticated psychological or social models. Organization culture allows the examination of the human behaviour, its joint and motivation by describing symbols, values and ideas within the organization;
2. *Organization culture is more and more accepted by the managers as a developing instrument of management*, because it holds the realities of the company which although difficult to describe are relevant for its competitive function. In order to help the organization to reach a high degree of performance in time, the organization culture must fulfill three fundamental conditions:
 - to be powerful through a coherent and rigorous values system, shared and unanimously agreed not only by the leaders but also by the employees of the company;
 - to be strategically adequate;
 - to be adaptable.

The organization culture is an essential aspect absent in the Romanian organizations, although there are many exceptions. Of course, this state of facts is determined by the important objective factors. The first aspect is the size of company, the issue of organization culture being discussed especially for big companies. But there are still foreign small companies (less than 50 employees) which initiate and impose a certain organization culture, from the very beginning.

In fact this is a mentality issue. A foreign company has initially a specific vision about business administration, a vision created in an advanced economic environment different from the Romanian one. Companies are really meant to succeed due to this vision, to people's selection and to assumed values.

In Romania there are two types of organization cultures: bureaucratic and entrepreneurial culture.

The bureaucratic culture is specific to national enterprises, educational and health institutions which belong to the government, military institutions. This type of culture is daring, oriented inside the system, and extremely politicized. An adaptation of this culture to the environment is difficult because there is not any strategic thinking or any knowledge of the issues concerning the competitive management. Within these organizations hostile relationships take place between employees and managers and the work results aren't seen as important.

The entrepreneurial culture appears within private companies, highly adaptable to the environment, with a great opening towards new values and strategies, and leads to positive results. Employees receive values, norms meant to create a relaxed, professional environment: respect for client, for employees and community, creativity, involvement, courage and fidelity towards organization.

In order to conclude, we may say that within the most Romanian companies, organization culture has to go through a change to fulfill a progressive role, eliminating in this way the employees' resistance to change. This is how, something difficult to count and measure, almost invisible, but real and concrete at the same time, such as business mentality, makes the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful company.

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Particularități ale manifestării tipurilor de culturi în organizații de diferite profiluri

Rezumat

Cultura organizațională reprezintă personalitatea unei organizații. Cultura organizației reprezintă un ansamblu de postulate despre acțiunea colectivă, recunoscute și exprimate prin simboluri ce au o valoare în care membrii firmei cred, le acceptă și le respectă.