Potential Problems with Having a Culture that is Too Strong in Modern Organizations

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Abstract:

In each and every society today, culture is a very important concept for both individuals and organizations because it identifies the fundamental set of ideas, rituals, beliefs, meaning, values, norms and language, the way in which things are to be done in an organization and in the life of an individual. Therefore, organization's culture encompasses what has been good and what has worked in the past. These practices can often be accepted within the organization by long serving members of an organization due to the fact that they have a collective interest towards building of a unified organization through shared system of beliefs, habits and traditions. In organizations there are deep-set beliefs about the way in which work should be organized, the way in which authority should be exercised and punished (Cole and Kelly, 2011). Organizational culture is not something that is written down or necessarily is easily stated. Rather, it is an intangible mixture of rules, relationships, values, custom which when taken together describe the distinctive feel of the organization. It is within this culture that individuals work and from which they learn the norms and values to which they are expected to subscribe. This is the arrangement and inter-relationship of the components parts position of an organization. Whereas culture is a hidden structure that can be seen and drawn in organization charts. Thus the organization Structure may reflect culture. This essay will describe three potential problems with having an organizational culture that is too strong.

Introduction

In each and every society today, culture is a very important concept for both individuals and organizations because it identifies the fundamental set of ideas, rituals, beliefs, meaning, values, norms and language, the way in which things are to be done in an organization and in the life of an individual. Therefore, organization's culture encompasses what has been good and what has worked in the past. These practices can often be accepted within the organization by long serving members of an organization due to the fact that they have a collective interest towards building of a unified organization through shared system of beliefs, habits and traditions. In organizations there are deep-set beliefs about the way in which work should be organized, the way in which authority should be exercised and punished (Cole and Kelly, 2011). Organizational culture is not something that is written down or necessarily is easily stated. Rather, it is an intangible mixture of rules, relationships, values, custom which when taken together describe the distinctive feel of the organization. It is within this culture that individuals work and from which they learn the norms and values to which they are expected to subscribe. This is the arrangement and inter-relationship of the components parts position of an organization. Whereas culture is a hidden structure that can be seen and drawn in organization charts. Thus the organization Structure may reflect culture. This essay will describe three potential problems with having an organizational culture that is too strong.

Martin and felenz, (2010:243), defines organizational culture as ''a set of shared often implicit assumptions, beliefs, values, and sense making procedures that influences and guide the behavior and thinking of organizational members and is continuously enacted and in turn reinforce or change the behavior of organizational members''.

Organization culture is taught to the person just like culture is taught by parents to the children thus modeling personal culture. Therefore, employees and people applying for jobs are advised to match their personality to a company's culture and fit to it so that they shape corporate culture for the new work place. Corporate culture is used to control coordinate and integrating company subsidiaries thus difference in national culture exist contributing to differences in the views of the management. Differences between national cultures are deep rooted values of the respective culture and these cultural values can shape how people expect companies to run and also their relationship between leaders and followers which should result in the employer and employee's expectations. However, the fundamental values that characterize culture in many organizations can be understood through different manifestation of language and slogans, symbols, stories, myths and legends, heroes, ceremonies, shared beliefs and values, behavioral norms.

According Nyimbili F( ) , Language is the means of universal communication. Most organizations tend to develop their own unique terminologies, phrase and acronyms in an organizational linguistic code. A slogan is a phrase or sentence that succinctly expresses key corporate values. Many organizations use slogans to convey specials meaning to employees. For instance, MTN workers will use their slogan (everywhere you go) when communicating within themselves and convey the message to each other. These elements play an important role in identifying a company's culture and also incomprehensible to those who do not belong to that culture. Thus language becomes a means of identifying the members from non-members. The association of business executives further explains that Symbols are objects or events that convey meaning to others. These are tangible manifestations and key elements of organizational culture. If you visit different organizations, you will discover that each and every organization is unique in terms of its physical layout, the use of facilities, centralization of an underling meaning, value and beliefs which is shared by people in the organization.

stories about an organization are told and make another element of culture. A story is a narrative based on the true event that is replaced frequently and shared among organizational employees. Stories are told to new employees in order to keep the organizational primary value alive. These are in a way an extension of organizational language. They epitomize the unwritten values and morals of the organizational life. If you collect the stories, anecdotes and jokes that are shared in an organization, they often read like plots and themes in which nothing changes except the characters. They rationalize the complexity and turbulence of activities and events to allow for predictable-taking. It is from these stories where some employees emerge as heroes. A hero is a figure that exemplified the deeds, character and attributes of a strong culture. Heroes are role models for employees to follow. Heroes in organizations are named people who act as prototypes or idealized examples by which members in the organization learn of the correct or 'perfect' behavior. The classic heroes are the founders of the organization who are often portrayed as much whiter and perfect than they actually are or were. A good example of a hero is the late Charles Mando who worked for ZNBC. His stories of hard work and brevity have taught people the ideal behavior and norms of organization culture at ZNBC.

Furthermore, ceremonies are also part an element of organization culture. A ceremony is a planned activity that makes up a special event and is conducted for the benefit of an audience. Organizations hold ceremonies to provide dramatic examples of company values. Ceremonies are special occasions that reinforce valued accomplishments, create bond among people by allowing them share an important event and anoint and celebrate heroes. For instance, at the University of Zambia there are a lot of functions that are cerebrated but most prominent one is the graduation ceremony which helps in reinforcing the organization's cultural values and assumptions (Cole and Kelly, 2011).

All organizations have their unique set of basic believes and values also called moral codes shared by most members. These are the mental pictures of organization reality and the basis of defining the right or wrong in the organization. In an organization, any behavior which evidently meets the customer's demands is essential for success and the criteria are acceptable even if it violates the established rules and procedures. Values and beliefs focus on organizational energies toward certain action, while discouraging the other behavioral patterns. Behavioral norm is one of the most important elements of organizational culture. They describe the nature of expectations which impinge on the member's behavior, behavioral norms determine how the members will behave, interact and relate with each other. The group norms determine whether or not one can openly disagree with superior or whether or not people can be friendly with employees in other departments. Behavior of employee is an important parameter while promoting the organization culture. The enforcement of behavioral norms also weeds out those members who do not 'fit in' in an organization and in most cases this reflects a strong organization culture.

A strong Organizational culture is a set of values and beliefs that are strongly adhered to and shared widely within the Organizational, but such a culture requires the Organization to do more culture specific investments. This implies that this form of culture should take serious actions to instill and spread its norms and values to its employees. This is because the strength of the Organizational culture is determined by the level of shared meaning of principles, norms and values; and the more universal the meaning is shared among the Organization's members, the stronger the culture. Cultures where employees' goals are aligned to the Organization's goals are often thought of as successful cultures.

However, when the organization culture is too strong it can face a lot of problems such as resistance to change, barrier to diversity, leadership problem and many more.

1. Resistance to change

Resistance to change is an action taken by employees in an organization when they perceive that a change that is occurring as a threat to them. A strong organizational culture that resists change can lead to stagnation. This is because Employees may be hesitant to adopt new technologies, processes, or ideas, hindering innovation and the organization's ability to stay competitive in a rapidly evolving market. Resistance to change often results in the persistence of outdated or inefficient processes that may lead Employees to be reluctant on embrace more efficient methods, leading to wasted time, resources, and increased operational costs. Change often brings new opportunities, whether in terms of entering new markets, adopting emerging technologies, or improving internal processes. Resisting change can cause an organization to miss out on these opportunities, limiting its potential for growth.

Constant resistance to change can create a negative work environment that can make Employees become frustrated, demoralized, or disengaged if they perceive that their suggestions or concerns are not considered. This can lead to decreased productivity and increased turnover in an organization. On the other hand, talented individuals often seek dynamic and innovative work environments and therefore, Organizations resistant to change may struggle to attract top talent, particularly among individuals who value a culture of continuous improvement and adaptability.

Change is often an opportunity for learning and development and Organizations that resist change may miss out on the chance to learn from both successes and failures, inhibiting their ability to adapt and improve over time. Additionally, Resistance to change can lead to increased conflict within the organization and Employees may hold differing views on the necessity or direction of change, leading to tension and a divisive atmosphere.

If an organization's resistance to change affects its ability to meet evolving customer needs or expectations, it can result in customer dissatisfaction and in turn, this can impact customer loyalty and the organization's market position. This is due to the fact that in rapidly changing industries, organizations that resist change risk becoming irrelevant. Markets evolve, and customer preferences shift; organizations that fail to adapt may find themselves unable to meet the demands of the modern business

2. Barrier to Diversity

The other potential problem that may arise as a result of having too strong culture in an organization is that a too strong organization culture will act as a barrier to diversity. Due to globalization, organizations are supposed to employ organizational cultures that are diverse such that anyone whose is employed in an organization should be able to fit in without difficulties. Therefore, organizations should accommodate new employees of different race, gender, disability and other differences that might be perceived as appropriate. Organizations with a strong culture may unintentionally screen out candidates who don't fit the established cultural mold. This can lead to a lack of diversity in the hiring process and limit the organization's access to a broader range of skills and perspectives. Additionally, Employees who do not conform to the dominant culture may feel isolated and may be more likely to leave the organization. This can result in a high turnover rate, particularly among individuals who bring diverse perspectives and experiences to the table.

A strong culture may contribute to a lack of inclusivity in decision-making processes. Individuals who do not align with the prevailing cultural norms may feel excluded or hesitant to contribute their insights, leading to suboptimal decision-making. Strong organizational cultures can perpetuate unconscious biases, making it challenging for individuals who do not fit the cultural norm to advance within the organization. This can hinder the development of a diverse leadership team

3. Leadership challenges

The other problem that may arise as a result of too strong organizational culture is leadership related problems. In this context leadership can be referred to the influence of the company owners or founders of the organization have on the creation of the organization. According to the Association of Business Executives (2014), When building an organization founders tend to impose their beliefs and values about

the nature of the organization, employees and other stakeholders, appoint and keep employees who think and feel the way they do and by so doing indoctrinate and socialize these individuals to their way of thinking. The problem may arise in that employees may feel bored, discouraged and generally unhappy due to the fact that in most cases supervisors are under equipped and so they tend to over supervise and this may make the employee to be unhappy. Furthermore, leadership if not properly handled conflict and tensions may arise in an organization especially that people are promoted not on merit but by being loyal to the founders or owners of the organization even if they are not competent. This may reduce productivity in the organization because of ineffectiveness and inefficiency. Additionally, due to the challenges in leadership, communication only flows down wards and in most cases restricted to friends and allies. But people are awarded in the same way although they might not contribute in the same way. This can create frustration and reduce profitability in an organization.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that the culture of an organization refers to the deep-seated values, attitudes, perceptions and behavior underpinning the organization and recognizes success or the failure factor in the achievement of the organizational goals and objectives. Thus a strong culture is one which is deeply embedded into the ways a business or organization does things. With a strong culture, employees and management understand what is required of them and they will try to act in accordance with the core values. A key benefit of a strong culture is that there is less need for detailed policies and procedures on the way things are done in an organization. Therefore, flexible strong and unified cultures will approach strategy and effect implementation in a positive manner by aligning goals and objectives. These goals and objectives can come into alignment when the organizational culture works to focus on productivity and getting the organization's primary mission accomplished. This may include getting products delivered to customers on time, shipping out more products than the organization's chief competitor or similar goals and objectives. This will create an effect in the organization that ensures that all work performed by each individual in the company and work group focuses on performance and on the strategic importance of the company.

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