Analysing Culture: Changing Culture

Organisational culture has been defined as "the way we do things around here". This raises the question of how to understand and analyse the culture before attempting to make changes to it. To illustrate the methods of analysis we suggest you ask up to five people in your organisation to provide their 'take' on the culture.

Everyone sees the organisation slightly differently but there will be aspects that are jointly felt to hold true. If these aspects are strengths then clearly they need to be sustained, if they are weaknesses and key to your future then action will be necessary to change them.

We suggest culture can be got at through anecdotes/stories or behaviours. We offer two approaches which reflect these two aspects:

- an **anecdote/story based method** which provides a method for getting indirectly at the critical issues (method 1)
- a **questionnaire method** which provides a systematic approach and which can identify the range of important aspects of culture (method 2)

Choose the method that suits your needs or interests. Five people will of course be only a limited sample but they will illustrate the method and give you some results to follow up.

Ask five individuals across the organisation to follow one of the two briefing documents that follow.

Clearly confidentiality will help. It may be sufficient to say to all five to return their results in a plain sealed envelope – you then have five unattributed envelopes for analysis. If more anonymity is needed then the responses can be independently collated and analysed. (We have wide experience in handling cultural data, 360 feedback and tailoring cultural surveys to specific needs.)

Cultural Method 1: Identifying Key Influences Through Anecdotes And Stories

Thank you for offering to give your 'take' on your organisation's culture. We are trying to get a realistic view of organisational culture and what it takes to change it.

Organisational culture can be defined as "the way we do things around here". We have found the anecdotes or stories that stick in the memory and get repeatedly told can reveal what is important in the culture.

Would you therefore give some real anecdotes or stories about the organisation?
It can help to have a context and we would suggest the following:

Imagine you are to have lunch with a good friend who is considering joining your organisation. What anecdotes or stories (not policy or facts but the guts of actual events and what really happened) would you tell them when they ask:

1. *What's important about the history or place where your organisation operates?*
   (provide a brief anecdote)

2. *Who or what gets top priority in your organisation – customers, managers, staff, procedures, etc?*
   (provide a brief anecdote)

3. *Who calls the shots when crunch decisions are necessary or a crisis occurs?*
   (provide a brief anecdote)

4. *How well do you manage change and what can typically get in the way?*
   (provide a brief anecdote)

Your responses can be treated confidentially by putting in a plain sealed envelope

Cultural Method 2 : Questionnaire Survey Of Key Influences
(Adapted from 'Transforming Company Culture'; David Drenan)

Thank you for offering to give your 'take' on your organisation's culture. We are trying to get a realistic view of organisational culture and what it takes to change it.

Organisational culture has been defined as "the way we do things around here". To understand this we attach a questionnaire asking your views.

There are twelve topics in the questionnaire and we have turned them into pairs of questions which can be rated i.e. 1= a little through to 5=a lot. We would ask you to rate your organisation as you see it. Please complete it fairly quickly and go for your overall impression (there may be a lot within each question but at this stage we want that overall sense). Make any notes under the *comments* heading. Take a copy if the results interest you.

Return the questionnaire in a sealed envelope to the person running the survey. This person will analyse the results and give you some feedback. Your results will remain confidential to you and the person doing the analysis.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE: IDENTIFYING KEY INFLUENCES

	Rating		
	A little	Moderately	A lot

1. Leadership

- How much do the leaders of the organisation positively influence its effectiveness?

  1-------2   ------- 3 ------- 4   ------5

  Comment

- How much do the leaders of the organisation negatively influence its effectiveness?

  1-------2   ------- 3 ------ 4   ------5

  Comment

2. History and tradition

- How much does tradition influence how your organisation works and values its customers?

  1-------2   ------- 3 ------- 4   ------5

  Comment

- How much is there blocking of suggested
  improvements?   1------2 ------ 3 ------ 4   ------5
Comment

3.   Services and technology

- How much does service to your customers
  drive the business?   1------2 ------ 3 ------ 4   ------5
Comment

- How much is technology used to
  encourage and manage change?   1------2 ------3------ 4   ------5
Comment

4.   Services and competition

- Given the organisation's size and
  competitive position in the market
  how much do you lead the way?   1------2 ------3------ 4   ------5
Comment

- How much are we influenced by what
  similar organisations do?   1------2 ------3------ 4   ------5
Comment

5.   Customers

- How systematically does the organisation
  collect information about what customers
  think of the services?   1------2 ------3------ 4   ------5
Comment

- How systematically does the organisation
  collect information about what customers
  want of the services?   1------2 ------3------ 4   ------5
Comment

6.   **Organisational expectations**

- How clearly is it set out what behaviour is expected of everyone (e.g. be team players, openness to possibilities)?   1------2 ------3------ 4 ------5

Comment

- How much do we follow through on what we say we will do (e.g. learn from mistakes deliver on performance targets)?   1------2 ------3------ 4 ------5

Comment

7.   **Information systems**

- How much do your information systems help managers control the organisation?   1------2 ------3------ 4 ------5

Comment

- How much do your information systems help workers do their jobs?   1------2 ------3------ 4 ------5

Comment

8.   **Legislation and the political and social context**

- How much does legislation determine your work?   1------2 ------3------ 4 ------5

Comment

- How much does the local political and social context shape the way you do things?   1------2 ------3------ 4 ------5

Comment

9.   **Policy and procedures**

- To what extent do policies and procedures empower workers?   1------2 ------3------ 4 ------5

Comment

- How much do policies and procedures
  frustrate the organisation effectiveness?   1-------2   -------3------- 4   ------5
Comment

10. Reward system and measurement

- How much do rewards (e.g. pay,
  responsibility and acknowledgement)
  match good individual performance?   1-------2   -------3------- 4   ------5
Comment

- How much are workload, standards and
  performance measured and monitored?   1-------2   -------3------- 4   ------5
Comment

11. Organisational clarity

- How clear and systematic is
  communication throughout the
  organisation?   1-------2   -------3------- 4   ------5
Comment

- How clear is it where decisions are
  made in the organisation?   1-------2   -------3------- 4   ------5
Comment

12. Vision and values

- If all workers were asked to write down the
  organisation's vision and values, how
  consistent would they be?   1-------2   -------3------- 4   ------5
Comment

- Do senior managers demonstrate genuine
  daily commitment to your published vision
  and values?   1-------2   -------3------- 4   ------5
Comment

(Adapted from "Transforming Company Culture", David Drenan, McGraw-Hill, 1992)

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