Abstract

This article is all about organizational culture. How various elements form a part of it and how they are perceived. The way to confront, accept or change behavioral patterns related to the corporate culture. An organization's culture may be more apparent to an external observer than an internal practitioner. Culture shows up in both visible and invisible ways. Some expressions of corporate culture are easy to observe. You can see the dress code, work environment, perks, and titles in a company. This is the surface layer of culture. These are only some of the visible manifestations of a culture. Business leaders often assume that their company's vision, values, and strategic priorities are synonymous with their company's culture. Unfortunately, too often, the vision, values, and strategic priorities may only be words hanging on a plaque on the wall. Corporate culture is actually the container for the vision, mission and values. It is not synonymous with them.

Keywords: Culture, Cultural barrier, Values, Perception, Ethics, Communication, Mission, Vision

Introduction

Culture, at the workplace, is a very powerful force, which is consciously and deliberately cultivated and is passed on to the incoming employees. It is the very thread that holds the organization together. The importance of corporate culture is emphasized by Peters and Waterman (1999), who state that, Without exception, the dominance and coherence of culture proved to be an essential quality of the excellent companies. Moreover the stronger the culture, the more it was directed to the marketplace, the less need was there for policy manuals, organization charts, detailed procedures or rules. The dictionary defines culture as "the act of developing intellectual and moral faculties, especially through education." This writing will use a slightly different definition of culture: "the moral, social, and behavioral norms of an organization based on the beliefs, attitudes, and priorities of its members.

Levels of organizational culture

Organizational culture exists on several levels, which differ in terms of visibility and resistance to change. When it comes to changing the culture of the organization, it becomes difficult to determine which are the more, and which are the less important elements that help shape an organization's culture. Hofstede (1990) developed a four-layered hierarchical model of culture which helps to identify and categories the constituent elements of culture, as reflected in figure levels of corporate culture.

- The least visible or deepest level is that of basic shared assumptions, which represents beliefs about reliability and human nature that are taken for granted.
- The next level of culture is that of cultural values, which represent collective beliefs, assumptions, and feelings about what things are good, normal, rational, and valuable.
- The next level is that of shared behaviors, including norms, which are more visible and somewhat easier to change than values. The reason is that people may be unaware of the values that bind them together.
The most superficial level of organizational culture consists of symbols. Cultural symbols are words (jargon or slang), gestures, and pictures or other physical objects that carry a particular meaning within a culture.

Importance of organizational culture

Culture can help reduce complexity and uncertainty. It provides a consistency in outlook and values, and makes possible the process of decision-making, co-ordination and control. Saiyadin (2003:258) explains that culture performs the following functions:-

Culture supplements rational management: creation of work culture is a time-consuming process. Therefore, organization culture cannot suddenly change the behaviour of people in an organization. Culture communicates to people through symbols, values, physical settings, and language, and, thereby supplements the rational management tools such as technology and structure.

Managing a multi-cultural team

"Culture is central to what we see, how we make sense of what we see, and how we express ourselves." And when you are managing a multicultural team, you are working with people who are different in what they see, how they make sense of what they see and how they express. This is indeed a challenging situation. But don't take your step backward, because the future is with global business.

1. Challenges

a) Cultural differences and mutual understanding
b) Geographical distance causing absence of face to face contact
c) Miscommunications due to language and cultural barriers
d) Difficulties in meeting motivational needs
e) Differences in work style, speed of work and quality standards
f) Different perceptions on ethics
g) Time zone differences and work co-ordination

2. Way of handling cultural differences

The first and the most important task in ones hands are to prepare the team for a culturally different work experience. Preparing the mindset to team members to accept differences and be open to each other.

a) Facilitate open discussions among the team on their cultural differences to help increasing a conducive environment to understand each other
b) Provide orientation and mentoring about how to communicate to a culturally different counterpart
c) Develop a concept of cultural synergy
d) Research and learn about other cultures
e) Respect and appreciate each other's differences and work together

f) Draw out a common approach towards project completion

3. Way of handle communication challenges

Communication is a complicated phenomenon on it own. There are researchers who study communication differences which arise from one street to another. So a common ground is what we are all looking for. A perfect common ground is impossible but you can train yourself and your team to attain acceptable international standards of communication. Moreover, country specific communication training will help bridge those gaps.

4. Co-ordination of time zone difference

Time zone difference is a major factor which will influence a team. The problem that one would face here is that of proper work co-ordination. But this could be reduced to some extent by a day and a night shift. This makes sure that work is carried out simultaneously.

5. Benefits of cultural team

Once a team reaches a common ground of understanding for each other, what results is a highly potential multicultural team which can serve the company with:
a) Variety of ideas
b) A global perspective of business
c) Efficient time management
d) Different dimensions of looking at a particular situation and identifying the problem.
e) Different problem solving approaches

6. Creating a positive corporate culture

Establishing a positive corporate culture is likely one of the most misunderstood business principles. Whether or not a business has attempted to create a 'culture', every company has one. Whether positive or negative, corporate culture is something that requires systematic effort over time.

Conclusion

Companies should make developing a positive corporate culture one of the top five goals for the business. Building the culture on clear vision, attainable goals, a genuine concern for the employees' professional growth, and an appreciation of their contributions to the success of the business will create a positive atmosphere and working environment. A corporate culture often happens by default instead of design. But companies that purposefully set up their culture are far more successful than companies that have a culture that exists by default.

Reference


