



## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, IT AND MANAGEMENT

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**ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE MANACLES TO EMBARK UPON DURING GLOBAL CONDENSE**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The impending pessimism about the global slowdown and its impact in countries like Brazil, Russia, India and China, employees are either facing or looking at a probable 'pink slip' (discharge notice). Human Resource departments in all companies are under the scanner. They have been subjected to intense pressure to cut down costs while keeping the standards and quality of services high. The employees in turn are influenced by the changing work culture. In such a scenario, the stage is set for path-breaking reforms and candid innovation to keep both factors of production, that is, employees and employers satisfied. This paper discusses the importance of innovative Human Resource Management techniques and practices that have deemed importance in the current economic scenario and the prudent steps HR can take in order to increase organisational effectiveness. It also attempts on understanding the flourishing challenges in organisational culture due to global recession and economic meltdown and presents some ideas which can be used to build a stronger and more attractive culture inside organizations.*

**KEYWORDS**

Organisational Culture, Global slowdown, HRD.

**UNDERSTANDING CORPORATE CULTURE**

**I**n any organization, there are the ropes to skip and the ropes to know"

- R. Ritti & G. Funk Louser

Culture refers to the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and other capabilities and habits acquired by men in a society. Two terms are key to the concept culture: history and shared phenomenon. With regard to the first, it may be stated that cultural mores of a society are passed on from generation to generation. The second key term which is basic to culture implies that the cultural ethos are shared among the members of a society. Organisational culture has been defined as the philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, attitudes and norms that knit an organization together and are shared by its employees. The employees have their own values, beliefs and habits which works together in an organization. Their own values and beliefs will not allow individuals to grow in an organization. They have to adapt the culture, the style, attitude of the work environment that prevails in the organization. It's important to determine which country the clients belong to or the origin country of the organization. Every country has its own culture and beliefs. Joanne Martin emphasizes the differing perspective of cultures in organizations. "As individuals come into contact with organizations, they come into contact with dress norms, stories people tell about what goes on, the organization's formal rules and procedures, its formal codes of behavior, rituals, tasks, and pay systems.

**EVOLUTION OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**

According to Arthur F Carmazzi, the dynamics of organisational culture are an "evolutionary" process that can change and evolve with the proper psychology of leadership. At each level of organisational evolution, people will be working, acting, thinking, and feeling at different levels of personal commitment. There are five types of organisational cultures which help in evolving a greater and more effective working environment.



## BOX 2.1: TYPES OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES

**1. Blame culture Characteristics**

- little trust
- act in self interest
- do not take many risks
- do not usually speak their mind
- do not come up with many new ideas
- paycheck driven
- stagnating growth
- avoid responsibility
- high level of fear

**2. Multi-Directional Culture Characteristics**

- Little communication
- People involved within their own departments only
- Loyalty is to specific groups and not to the organization
- Cliquish
- Lots of gossip
- Critical of other departments
- Little cross-departmental cooperation

**3. Leadership Enriched Culture Characteristics**

- People view the organisation as an extension of themselves
- People feel good about what they personally achieve through the organization
- Cooperation is exceptional
- Individual goals are aligned with the goals of the organization
- People use group resources to actively solve problems
- Not limited to job description, will do what it takes to make things happen
- Mostly everyone is in sales, marketing and PR; they are walking ambassadors
- People are consistently bringing out the best in each other
- Leaders do not develop followers, but develop other leaders
- Leadership is contribution driven and not ego driven
- Very Low employee turnover
- Most are passionate about the organisation and what it represents

**4. Brand Congruent Culture Characteristics**

- People believe in the product or service of the organization
- People feel good about what their company is trying to achieve
- Cooperation is good
- Use personal resources to actively solve problems
- Not limited to job description, will actively look for solutions
- Many are passionate about the product/service

**5. Live and Let Live Culture****Characteristics**

- Mental Stagnation
- Low Creativity
- Average cooperation
- Average communication
- Little future vision
- Monotonous routine
- Lacks passion

**IMPACT OF CULTURE**

Culture is vital to achieve a company's competitive strategy. When a company faces major change, often the dominant culture no longer supports the company's objectives. As John Kotter, a management expert, points out, the starting point for change efforts begin with a frank discussion of potentially unpleasant facts: new competition, shrinking margins, decreasing market share, flat profits, a lack of revenue growth, or other relevant measures of declining competitive position. These worrying signals are often followed by change efforts that come under many banners: total quality management, reengineering, turnaround, cultural change, right sizing and restructuring. A desired culture is therefore one that supports the competitive position and business plan of the company.

Organisational culture is usually created by the dominant coalition (top management with the power to set direction and effect structure in organisations). Their leadership style, in turn, influences communication. Culture therefore influences the communication climate (degree of openness and candor) in an organisation. Positive communication climates (humanistic or participative) encourage problem-centred, open and candid communication where people tend to be respected and trusted.

The converse applies in mechanistic organisations where the participation is replaced with power and control. A poor communications climate has a clear business cost including low morale, reduced production, poor customer service, loss of reputation (bad mouthing the company), weak relationships and reduced

personal and organisational learning.

### TRIVIA IN CHANGING CULTURE

As long as the culture remains relevant to the organisation it benefits managers as they are relieved of much of the work associated with controlling or directing staff. However, if the environment in which the organisation is operating changes, the culture can become dysfunctional. Employees in a dysfunctional culture will then persist in applying old (and irrelevant) strategies to new problems denying their obsolescence and blaming external causes and individuals for their failure, rather than violate the culture. Left unchecked, this behaviour can continue until the culture causes the organisation to die rather than adapt. Cultural change therefore involves the creation of a new system of values and beliefs that allows the organisation to perform.

Many organisations are re-designed or restructured, on the assumption that this is all that is needed to achieve major change. If the organisation has a dysfunctional culture and the culture is left unchecked a phenomenon known as 'spring-back' occurs, that is, people simply continue to act as they had under the old structure, regardless of their new titles and reporting lines. However, once a culture is successfully changed, the new volunteer mindset it creates relieves management of a piecemeal struggle to reform possibly hundreds of management and/or work practices. This represents an enormous saving of valuable resources.

### CHANGE IN CULTURE DUE TO THE ECONOMIC MELTDOWN

Due to the economic crisis springing up, there has been a tremendous effect in stock market, business inventory levels, general wages & most importantly the weakening of organizational culture. It is important to understand how deeply the roots of organizational culture go during this period. Organizational culture is rooted in the shared tacit assumptions of the organization. These tacit beliefs drive behavior throughout the organization.

Edgar Schein believes organizational culture provides members of the organization "stability, consistency, and meaning." The change agent who threatens those three things will surely meet strong resistance. At this present junction every organization which is affected by global recession definitely will also be undergoing some change in its culture. As organizational cultures are created by new rituals, practices, stories, this is again the time for formation of new stories, behaviour, practices.

- Existing employees are scanned under organizational x-rays daily,
- employees are terminated on different causes created to screen the true reason for chucking out of the job – employee cut down,
- working hours are increased,
- facilities, benefits and salaries are cut down,
- increased work load and responsibilities

All these kinds of actions taken by HR to meet recession also affects the freedom, joy of working, homeliness for the employees, which in return will change the behaviour, attitude, commitment thus indirectly affecting the culture of the organization.

### SUGGESTED HR STRATEGIES TO REDUCE EFFECTS OF CRISIS

The need of the hour is to accelerate leadership and uplift management & operational skills at all the levels of an organization. In a bid to contain the damage from the down cycle and from structural inefficiencies, all possible short-term operational and structural measures to cut costs should be taken. These include adjusting production and management structures, cutting back overtime and temporary work, increasing efficiency and reducing personnel. Some of the strategies which HR can adopt at this moment to ensure minimum resistance to changing organizational culture are:

#### a. Continuous Self Assessment And Creative Thinking

Managers have to merge perception of the employees with the organisational culture and major changes are made from time to time based on changing trends of the business. However, the changing old norms and traditional values is a time consuming process. A dynamic climate is created through the cumulative efforts of the managerial actions, interactions, technological facilities and initiatives from the employees themselves. Continuous self assessment and creative thinking will help to bring about changes in organisational culture.

#### b. Behaviour based coaching

Behaviour based coaching can uniquely affect positive behavioural change impacting business results. Only behaviour based coaching can have a positive effect on valued behaviours e.g.; leadership behaviours which positively influence outcomes such as employee commitment, engagement and organizational climate, which directly affect performance and productivity levels associated with superior business performance.

#### c. Communication

Time must be dedicated to positive reasoning. Take should be taken to listen to the employees for confidence building. Staff should be encouraged to objectively give their assessment of where the organization was, where it is and where they believe the organization should be and what should be done to survive the recession. Staffs must be encouraged to support for the strategic action plans. At the same time, two ways communication process must be strengthened and time dedicated for feed backs.

#### d. Positive team culture

Shared vision must be stressed. Strategies and belief in team culture, improves symbiotic team spirit because of the positive value addition of synergy. HR Managers should at this time radiate and give hope and lift their staff from negativity to positivity. A positive team culture stresses collectivism, and symbiosis.

#### e. Learning

Learning is the key that opens the individual employee to knowledge beyond his/her immediate reach. Design programmes that put the organization on top of the pack and enable the organization have a competitive edge. Staff may not necessarily be moved from their places of work because of the innovations like e-learning and intranet services. Encourage staff to participate in workshops and conferences to enable them compare notes on experiences and learn from others. Where only a few staff can attend, those who attended should be given an opportunity to share their learning experiences with their colleagues at a forum.

#### BOX 5.1: LEADERSHIP FOCUS DURING DOWNTURN

- |                         |                                  |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Transparency.        | 6. Incremental changes.          |
| 2. Accountability.      | 7. Address issues of insecurity. |
| 3. Credible leadership. | 8. Walk-the-talk.                |
| 4. Mentoring.           | 9. Coaching.                     |
| 5. Proactive strategy.  | 10. Nurturing.                   |

### CONCLUSION

Economic slow down, Financial Tsunami, down turn, recession, call it what you like but we seems to be heading for a definite period of persistent rise in uncertainties in the days ahead. We are experiencing what some would even call the worst recession since the Great Depression and the similarities between the Great Depression and the current recession aka Credit Crunch recession are very similar. Much like the credit crunch today, the Great Depression began with a stock market crash and the eventual meltdown of the financial system. As such, measures taken by different organisation across varied industry, in preparation for the bad times to come, ranges from the mild to the drastic – pay cut, hiring, freeze lay offs and retrenchment are the buzz words today. At this point,



more responsible senior leadership teams, good communication, learning and behaviour based coaching will have positive effect on behavioural change, thus leading to an increased productivity of better business practices.

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