PERSONAL VALUES AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

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Abstract

Person-Organization fit seeks to identify how congruence of organizational culture and individual values predicts individual attitudes and behaviors. In the organizational development field, and particularly in my work in organizational culture, the importance of a solid set of core values, fundamental beliefs about what "right" looks like, in your company cannot be overstated. Unfortunately, many companies today still struggle to create meaningful values in their organizations despite their best efforts. Ideally, an organization's core values explicitly define how people will behave with each other and with customers. When values succeed, the daily behaviors of your people will embody the core values you set forth.

Keywords: Values, Culture, Person, Organization

Introduction

Organizational values seek to define the acceptable standards which govern the behavior of individuals within the organization. This governance exercise is sometimes carried out with much planning and forethought and may be set up in quite formal ways, potentially leading to published statements about organizational values or at least a "motto," slogan or list of values that a given enterprise deems to be worthy. However, it is just as likely that any organizational values have "evolved" over time and are embedded in some ways in a "corporate culture." the articulated values of an organization can provide a framework for the collective leadership of an organization to encourage common norms of behavior which will support the achievement of the organization's goals and mission. However, individuals need to "buy into" these values in order for them to have their intended effect.

Organizational Values

Organizational values are present, whether they are defined or not. They are represented in your organizational culture.

Culture brings us views of warm and fuzzy thoughts yet it is an essential, tangible thing. Whether or not you define it, you have organizational values. They are defined by the people working there. So the questions become:

- Do you want your organizational values defined by various individuals in various departments? *or*
- Do you want to define the organizational values you desire and then exemplify them across all departments?

My advice. Take the latter approach and build a culture and organization for the long haul. You will have a more engaged group of people working together to do great things for your customers and stakeholders.

<u>Personal Values</u>

It is amazing to see how individuals don't take the time to define and write their personal values. Personal values answer at least three questions:

- How will you lead in good times?
- How will you lead in challenging times?
- What type of person do you want to be remembered as?

Don't take your intuitive feeling as your personal values. Take the time to write the answers and think about them. Refine them. Write them again. Live them. Lead by them.

This is what personal values are about, and we need to take the time to define them and then use them daily.

what are some examples of organizational values?

The 7 Virtues model

The seven virtues were initially evolved by Greek philosophers and most notably Aristotle and Plato. The four initial virtues were **temperance, wisdom, patience, and humility** and these were deemed to be overall positive attitudes for a person to develop. Later writers, especially in the early Jewish and Christian faiths, added three more virtues to this list—these were **diligence, kindness, and charity.** Although all seven of these values were expressed as moral themes for all individuals to aspire collectively, they have been widely adopted by organizations and have been interpreted and/or given additional meaning in many cases. Let's look at each of these therefore in a little more depth and by describing these values in the way most commonly seen in modern organizational life today.

1. Temperance

This is also sometimes expressed as restraint or self-control. In business, this has often been defined as a constant "mindfulness" both personally and towards others. It is also about paying attention to people and surroundings but essentially involves practicing self-control, moderation, and deferred gratification. This value is therefore ultimately about the proper moderation between self versus public interest. Many non-profits, especially in the public service arena and people support realm, adopt this value.

2. Wisdom

This is also sometimes expressed as knowledge or fidelity. In business, this has often been defined as being about being honest with oneself, one's colleagues, and to people in general. This is therefore the ability to refrain from being distracted and influenced by temptation or corruption when considering what to do. Constant education and personal betterment are considered to be the best paths to develop this ability. Many "knowledge-based" organizations such as research or consulting companies adopt this value.

3. Patience

This is also sometimes expressed as peace and moderation. In business, this has often been defined as being quiet endurance including the effort to resolve conflicts and injustice in a calm and peaceful manner (as opposed to resorting to irritation and hostility). In essence then, this value is about creating a sense of peaceful stability rather than confrontational antagonism. Many large technical or scientific organizations (such as the pharmaceutical industry for instance) adopt this value.

4. Humility

This is also sometimes expressed as modesty and selflessness. Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less. It is a spirit of self-examination and being charitably disposed towards people you disagree with (including giving credit where credit is due). In business, this often includes taking on tasks which are difficult, tedious or unglamorous and being committed to promises, no matter how big or small they may be. Many people-service organizations, such as charities and fund-raising enterprises adopt this value.

5. Diligence

This is also sometimes expressed as persistence and faith. This is being quiet and careful in your actions and work. It is therefore a calmly decisive work ethic, involving steadfastness in belief and the persistence or tenacity not to give up. In business, this often includes managing personal time and monitoring personal activities to guard against laziness. Many action-centered/project management or engineering type oriented organizations adopt this value.

6. Kindness

This is also sometimes expressed as hope and compassion. This is compassion and friendship for its own sake or empathy and trust without prejudice or resentment. In business, this also involves unselfish consideration towards others and voluntary kindness without bias or spite. This means having a positive outlook and cheerful demeanor, which in turn inspires kindness in others. Many public care organizations such as hospitals adopt this value.

7. Charity

This is also sometimes expressed as generosity or self-sacrifice. This term has taken on a narrower meaning in modern times being restricted to benevolent giving. However, this value is an unquestioning sense of belief in and generosity towards all others. In business, this means that this value has been used extensively to apply to encouraging and even celebrating diversity in people in all of its manifestations. Many "giving" organizations inevitably adopt this value but so do many other non-profits or NGO's for example.

Organizations may adopt one of these values as being paramount, or to be pursued first before others, or may pick two or even three of these as a set of core values. Only in rare cases would an organization try to encourage adherence to all seven of these values, as they often believe that they lack the resources to assist people in the journey needed if they were to take on too many values at once.

Organizational culture, on the other hand, is comprised of broad guidelines which are rooted in organizational practices learned on the job. Experts, including Dr. Hofstede, agree that changing organizational culture is difficult and takes time. What is often overlooked or at least underestimated when two or more companies merge/integrate is how the underlying personal values of employees impact how they perceive the corporate culture change efforts. A person can learn to adapt to processes and priorities, and a person can be persuaded to follow the exemplar behaviors of leaders in an organization. But if these priorities and leadership traits go against the deeply held national cultural values of employees, corporate values (processes and practices) will be undermined. What is appropriate in one national setting is wholly offensive in another. What is rational in one national setting is wholly irrational in another. And, corporate culture never trumps national culture.

The answer, then, lies not in abandoning efforts to unify organizations after a merger or cancelling efforts to build high performance culture, but in overlaying and harmonizing local interpretations of corporate practices to cultural norms.

ITAP International works at the intersection of business and national cultural value differences. ITAP provides the following services for organizations across borders:

- Align leadership, processes, operational structure, and stakeholder perception
- Culturally adapted competencies for recruiting, selecting and measuring employee performance
- Localization of change initiatives such as training and coaching
- Global team development

Conclusion

All individuals develop a set of personal values, which help them to make decisions in the world. These values can either sometimes well-align or clash with the values of other individuals at work or with the wider organization of which they are a part. Where a clear clash happens, individuals can elect to work in a different and more aligned climate, adjust their values somewhat or try to adjust or change the organizational values in their current enterprise (if they deem the effort to be worthwhile). In all cases, the greater the values overlap and consistency, it is usually a better, more productive and happier outcome for the person and the organization concerned. In a world where change can be bewildering, values offer touchstones defining our actions, our decisions and the manner in which we treat others. They connect with the most powerful forces dictating our actions: conscientiousness, integrity, and self-respect. These factors represent the fundamental underpinnings which shape our capacity to lead. As business leaders, we are sometimes tempted to compromise these basic truths, dodging, ignoring or compromising our principles, however ultimately, we return to these simple truths.

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