

## MAPPING THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AN ANALYTICAL APPROACH

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### Organizational Culture - The Concept

The phenomenon called culture generally refers to the pattern of development reflected in a society's system of knowledge, ideology, values, laws and day-to-day ritual.

Culture is also a consequence of human endeavour to manage societal uncertainties and striving for achievement of order in social life. Like societies, people in organizations face many uncertainties, their environments change due to economic conditions, technological developments, or the actions of competitors. In order to compete in a fast-developing global economy, people in organizations must deal with different types of customers and a large array of possible new competitors. Added to this is the corporate social responsibility which calls upon them to address issues like environmental preservation, work-life balance and even elder and child care. Interestingly, all these happen even as the social order within their organizations and their boundaries are changing due to mergers, reorganizations, and downsizing. Often the best option for managers is still not clear. Amid all the chaos, managers are called upon to ensure their organizations' survival and continued prosperity. There is a *premium* on failure as failure could mean all sorts of threats and uncertainties, including loss of job, social status, and self-esteem. Thus, not surprisingly, like people in other settings people in organizations develop cultures.

Their culture provide organizational members with more or less articulated sets of ideas that help them individually and collectively to cope with all the uncertainties and ambiguities. Culture also help people to cope with uncertainties by providing them with accepted ways of expressing and affirming their beliefs, values, and norms. Culture has epertories of cultural *forms* that members use to express the substance of their culture. Culture forms imbue actions and other entities with meanings; they enable people to communicate and celebrate their ideologies in many different ways. This is possible because most human actions have dual consequences - they both accomplish certain technical and practical ends and express some subset of cultural meaning.

Organizational leaders increasingly view sweeping "cultural change" initiatives leading to global & customer-focused culture as essential for competitiveness in global market.

Though interest in organizational culture dates back to the late 1970s, increased globalization of business has made organizational culture as one of the vital corporate benchmarks of the twenty first century. The war for talent has ensured that organizations must search continuously for innovative approaches to identify, attract and retain valuable human capital. In one way they are doing this by focusing on their culture, an intangible but valuable resource.

This paper discusses:

- Brief conceptual framework of organizational culture.
- Identification of the dimensions of organizational culture by using Delphi Method.
- Creating an hierarchy of dimensions by assigning relative weights to these dimensions by application of Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) and.
- Model to identify percentage of gap in various organizational culture dimensions.

The purpose of this study is to help an organization identify culture dimension gaps so as to under take relevant HRD/OD initiatives to improve organizational effectiveness & gain competitive edge.

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The word *culture* has many meanings and connotations. When applied to groups and organizations, there is a likelihood of conceptual and semantic confusion because groups and organizations are also difficult to define unambiguously. Most people have a connotative sense of what culture is but have difficulty defining it abstractly. While talking about organizational culture there is a general agreement that 'it' exists and that 'it' is important in its effects but there is a completely different idea as to what 'it' is. To make matters worse, the concept of culture has been the subject of considerable debate and there are various approaches to defining and studying culture.

#### Dimensions of Organizational Culture - Delphi Method

Preliminary survey of available literature on organizational culture presented a wide spectrum where dimensions of culture vary from absolutely abstract elements like metaphors to highly formal organizational practices as reward mechanisms. This necessitated a freezing of reference point from where one could start the journey. It was thought prudent to limit the search for dimensions to the ones more relevant to the present organizational context and attempt study of organizational culture vis-a-vis these dimensions.

The study began with churning of literature for identifying a set of dimensions that could form the basis for the present study.

Based on literature survey, initially, a total of more than 40 dimensions were identified and referred to a select panel of practising managers, academicians and research students. In the first round of moderation the select panel scaled down the number of dimensions to 31 which was narrowed down to 23 after second round of moderations and finally after third round the number came down to 11 (Eleven) dimensions or parameters of Organizational Culture, pertaining to more formal aspects of Organizational Working, were identified. These have been shown in **Table 1**.

The above Eleven (11) parameters were again forwarded to earlier referred panel. The

panellists were requested to do a paired comparison of all the eleven parameters with each other, with the help of a five point measurement scale, resulting into a Matrix. The Eleven parameters and sample matrix forwarded to panellists for paired comparison of the dimensions of organizational culture is shown as **Annexure I**. Also shown as **Annexure II** is a completed Matrix by one of the panelists.

#### Assigning Weights to Dimensions of Culture

Once the responses were received, Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP)<sup>1</sup> was applied to the matrix generated out of responses by the panellists to derive the relative weights of all eleven parameters. Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP), developed by Thomas Saaty, provides a proven & effective means to deal with complex decision-making and can assist in identifying and weighing selection criteria, analysing the data collected for the criteria and expediting the decision-making process. This tool can be used when making complex decisions involving multiple criteria.

AHP helps capture both subjective and objective evaluation measures, providing a useful mechanism for checking the consistency of the evaluation measures and alternatives suggested by the team thus reducing bias in decision-making. The resultant weights of eleven dimensions & their hierarchy have been shown in the **Table 2**.

Thus, change readiness contributes the maximum in the type of organization culture that today's organizations have. The tendency to value smart talk in comparison to smart action has minimum contribution to formation of culture. In between the two dimensions, in descending order, falls the remaining. The above weights may be considered as a benchmark for present day organizations and can be taken as **desired weights**.

#### Identifying Organizational Culture Dimension Gaps

The process which has been adopted above using panel of experts to derive relative weights of various dimensions of organizational culture the

same can be followed in any sample organization to have an assessment of the present situation with regard to the existing levels of various dimensions of organizational culture. (**Annexure III** may be distributed amongst the employees of the organization.)

Then the percentage gap between the desired and existing level of various culture dimensions can be determined in the following manner:

$$\text{Percentage of Gap} = \frac{\text{Desired Weights} - \text{Existing Weights}}{\text{Desired Weights}} \times 100$$

To illustrate it further, we take an example of an hypothetical organization with the desired & existing weights for different cultural dimensions as given in **Table 3**. The table also exhibits the percentage gaps for various dimensions.

The above table exhibits that in case of the hypothetical organization percentage of gap is maximum in case of change feedings 37.5 % and 21.43 % in creativity and tolerance for failure. This shows that these two dimensions of organizational culture are most alarming and hence asks for immediate attention, prescription & action. 17 elements suggested by a Massachusetts Consulting Firm give below can be of assistance to meet the topmost contingency.

- Is the sponsor of change high up enough to have power to effectively deal with resistance?
- Is day-to-day leadership supportive of the change and committed to it?
- Is there a strong sense of urgency from senior management about the need for change and is it shared by the rest of the organization?
- Does management have a clear vision of how the future will look different from the present?
- Are there objective measures in place to evaluate the change effort and are reward systems explicitly designed to reinforce them?

- Is the specific change effort consistent with other changes going on within the organization?
- Are functional managers willing to sacrifice their personal self-interest for the good of the organization as a whole?
- Does management pride itself on closely monitoring changes and actions taken by competitors?
- Is the Importance of the customer and a knowledge of customer needs well accepted by every one in the workforce?
- Are managers and employees rewarded for taking risks, being innovative, and looking for new solutions?
- Is the organizational structure flexible?
- Are communication channels open both downward and upward?
- Is the organization's hierarchy relatively flat?
- Has the organization successfully implemented major changes in the recent past?
- Is employee satisfaction and trust in management high?
- Is there a high degree of cross-boundary interactions and cooperation between units in the organization?
- Are decisions made quickly, taking into account a wide variety of suggestions?

Similarly other HRD/ OD interventions can be planned and administered looking into the specific organizational requirements. What is of utmost importance is the follow-up and feed back of the initiatives.

## Conclusion

Quantitative measure of Organizational Culture can be useful in evaluating & comparing the prevailing culture in different organizations.

Moreover, creating an hierarchy of culture dimensions can be of immense help to organizations in pinpointing and focusing on specific dimension while designing organizational design strategies.

Further, having an idea about importance of an individual dimension of culture can also help organizations in designing H R & Training related interventions in their quest for organizational excellence.

**TABLE ONE: DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE**

<b>A</b>	Risk Taking
<b>B</b>	Stability of Institutional Structures
<b>C</b>	Creativity & Tolerance of Failures
<b>D</b>	Immediacy of Rewards
<b>E</b>	Learning
<b>F</b>	Consistency
<b>G</b>	Fear
<b>H</b>	Talk Instead of Action
<b>I</b>	Internal Competition
<b>J</b>	Dissent
<b>K</b>	Change Readiness

**TABLE TWO: APPLICATION OF AHP FOR DERIVING OF WEIGHTS OF DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE**

S.No.	DIMENSIONS	WEIGHTS
1	Change Readiness	0.16
2	Learning	0.15
3	Creativity & Tolerance of Failure	0.14
4	Consistency	0.12
5	Risk Taking	0.11
6	Dissent Accepted	0.09
7	Immediacy of Rewards	0.07
8	Stability of Organizational Structures	0.06
9	Internal Competition	0.04
10	Fear	0.03
11	Talk instead of Action	0.02
<b>Sum total of weights</b> (Difference of 0.01 is due to approximation)		<b>1.00</b>

**TABLE THREE: DESIRED AND EXISTING WEIGHTS FOR DIFFERENT CULTURE DIMENSIONS**

S.No.	CULTURE DIMENSIONS	DESIRED WEIGHTS	EXISTING WEIGHTS	PERCENTAGE OF GAP
1	Change Readiness	0.16	0.10	37.50
2	Learning	0.15	0.14	6.67
3	Creativity & Tolerance of Failure	0.14	0.11	21.43
4	Consistency	0.12	0.12	0.00
5	Risk Taking	0.11	0.09	18.18
6	Dissent Accepted	0.09	0.15	-66.67
7	Immediacy of Rewards	0.07	0.08	-14.29
8	Stability of Organizational Structures	0.06	0.06	0.00
9	Internal Competition	0.04	0.05	-25.00
10	Fear	0.03	0.04	-33.33
11	Talk instead of Action	0.02	0.06	-200.00
<b>Sum total of weights</b> (Difference of 0.01 is due to approximation)		<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	

## ANNEXURE - I

Dear Panelist,

Let me express my gratitude for your valued contribution in the earlier rounds aimed at narrowing down the list of dimensions. Given below are the eleven dimensions of organizational culture with brief explanation about each so as to give them a proper perspective. On following page is a Matrix for paired-comparison of dimensions of organizational culture listed from A to K.

DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE	
A	<b>ENCOURAGE RISK TAKING</b> Organization has faith in its employees and exhibits support for employees' risk-taking abilities.
B	<b>STABILITY OF INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES</b> There is no frequent restructuring of processes/organizational structures unless business objectives warrant such change.
C	<b>VALUE CREATIVITY &amp; TOLERATE FAILURES</b> Organization believes that encouraging creativity & experimentation enhances organizational productivity & longevity. As a natural corollary organizational tolerance for failures increases.
D	<b>IMMEDIACY OF REWARDS FOR GOOD TRIES &amp; SMALL WINS</b> Organization believes that sincere attempts are important and has a system in place, for rewarding all good tries and smallest of wins. Further, the rewards have immediacy for improved morale & motivation and reinforcing the sincerity of attempts.
F	<b>CONSISTENCY</b> Top management is seen to 'walk the talk' and all decisions and actions are perceived as consistent, every time.
G	<b>FEAR ORIENTATION</b> Organization operates on the premise that being tough and motivating people through fear is one sure way of success.
H	<b>TALK SUBSTITUTES FOR ACTION</b> There is a tendency to treat talking about something as equivalent to actually doing something about it. Thus, once a decision had been made to do something, no additional work was required to ensure implementation.
I	<b>INTERNAL COMPETITION IS A MOTIVATOR</b> Organization believes in the dictum that internal competition brings out the best performance in their employees notwithstanding the fact that sometimes internal competition takes the form of unit/division Vs the organization.
J	<b>DISSENT SIGNIFIES OUT OF BOX THINKING</b> Dissent is not considered as indiscipline and signifies 'out of box' thinking, which generates new ideas for the organization to work on.
K	<b>CHANGE READINESS OVERRIDES POWER OF PRECEDENT</b> Organization encourages change-initiatives and does not glorify the past, as it believes that precedent can interfere with organizational performance because management practices are often carried from the past into the future.

I. Kindly use the following measurement scale:

Extremely Preferred – 5, Very Strongly Preferred – 4, Strongly Preferred – 3, Moderately Preferred – 2, Equally Preferred – 1

II. Method of Comparison

The Dimensions are to be compared in pairs. Illustration- Compare A & B first then A & C and so on. If A is strongly preferred to B, enter A3 in AB cell.

## ILLUSTRATION

DIMENSIONS	DIMENSIONS				
	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>
<i>A</i>	-	A3	C2	A3	A2
<i>B</i>	-	-	B2	B1	B3
<i>C</i>	-	-	-	C1	C2
<i>D</i>	-	-	-	-	D2
<i>E</i>	-	-	-	-	-

## MATRIX FOR COMPARISON OF DIMENSIONS

DIMENSIONS	DIMENSIONS										
	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>J</i>	<i>K</i>
<i>A- Risk Taking</i>	-										
<i>B- Stable Organizations</i>	-	-									
<i>C- Creativity &amp; Tolerance of Failure</i>	-	-	-								
<i>D- Immediacy of Rewards</i>	-	-	-	-							
<i>E- Learning</i>	-	-	-	-	-						
<i>F-Consistency</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-					
<i>G- Fear</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
<i>H- Talk instead of Action</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			
<i>I- Internal Competition</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
<i>J- Dissent Accepted</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
<i>K- Change Readiness</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Thank you very much for sparing your valuable time.

## ANNEXURE - II

### COMPLETED MATRIX FOR COMPARISON OF DIMENSIONS

DIMENSIONS	DIMENSIONS										
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
<i>A- Risk Taking</i>	-	A3	C3	D3	E3	E3	A4	A4	A4	J1	K3
<i>B- Stable Organizations</i>	-	-	C3	D2	E2	F3	B4	B4	B4	J1	K3
<i>C- Creativity &amp; Tolerance of Failure</i>	-	-	-	D1	E1	F1	C4	C4	C4	C2	K3
<i>D- Immediacy of Rewards</i>	-	-	-	-	E3	F1	D4	D4	D4	J1	K3
<i>E- Learning</i>	-	-	-	-	-	F1	E4	E4	E4	E2	K3
<i>F- Consistency</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	F4	F4	F4	F2	K3
<i>G- Fear</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	H2	I2	J4	K4
<i>H- Talk instead of Action</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	I1	J4	K4
<i>I- Internal Competition</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	J4	K4
<i>J- Dissent Accepted</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	K4
<i>K- Change Readiness</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Thank you very much for sparing your valuable time.



## ANNEXURE - III

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

#### A. General Guidelines

1. This questionnaire is an attempt towards study of Organizational Culture in your organization.
2. The responses are not for any kind of evaluation of any employee.
3. The identity of the respondent is not being recorded anywhere, hence be absolutely relaxed while completing the questionnaire.
4. There is no right or wrong answer, just express your views frankly & honestly.
5. Confidentiality of all sorts is assured.

Kindly use the following scale to show your agreement /disagreement with the statements given below

**Strongly Agree**   **Agree**   **Cannot Say**   **Disagree**   **Strongly Disagree**

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

1	ENCOURAGE RISK TAKING Organization has faith in its employees and exhibits support for employees' risk-taking abilities.	1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5
2	STABILITY OF INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES There is no frequent restructuring of processes or organizational structures unless business objectives warrant such change.	1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5
3	VALUE CREATIVITY & TOLERATE FAILURES Organization believes that encouraging creativity & experimentation enhances organizational productivity & longevity. As a natural corollary organizational tolerance for failures increases.	1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5
4	IMMEDIACY OF REWARDS FOR GOOD TRIES & SMALL WINS Organization believes that sincere attempts are important and has a system in place, for rewarding all good tries and smallest of wins. Further, the rewards have immediacy for improved morale & motivation and reinforcing the sincerity of attempts.	1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5
5	ENCOURAGE LEARNING & KNOWLEDGE SHARING Organization has work systems and practices, which instil learning and knowledge-sharing attitude in the employees; as it believes that present era values knowledge-assets more than physical-assets.	1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5
6	CONSISTENCY Top management is seen to 'walk the talk' and all decisions and actions are perceived as consistent, every time.	1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5
7	FEAR ORIENTATION Organization operates on the premise that being tough and motivating people through fear is one sure way of success.	1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5
8	TALK SUBSTITUTES FOR ACTION There is a tendency to treat talking about something as equivalent to actually doing something about it. Thus, once a decision had been made to do something, no additional work was required to ensure implementation.	1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5
9	INTERNAL COMPETITION IS A MOTIVATOR Organization believes in the dictum that internal competition brings out the best performance in their employees notwithstanding the fact that sometimes internal competition takes the form of unit/division Vs the organization.	1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5
10	DISSENT SIGNIFIES OUT OF BOX THINKING Dissent is not considered as indiscipline and signifies 'out of box' thinking, which generates new ideas for the organization to work on.	1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5
11	CHANGE READINESS OVERRIDES POWER OF PRECEDENT Organization encourages change-initiatives and does not glorify the past, as it believes that precedent can interfere with organizational performance because management practices are often carried from the past into the future.	1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5