

CULTURE: a system of shared understandings or meanings about the organisation, its purpose, its members, and how they should behave

How to identify a culture

Culture is expressed in the values, assumptions, feelings, and beliefs of the organisation. These, in turn, are reflected more visibly and interpretably in:

- Observable symbols
- Physical layout
- Communication patterns
- Stories
- Practices and behaviours.

Observable symbols:

- Apple logo
- 70s multi-coloured with a bite (byte) out of it – “image of a \$100 million company at a time when it had twelve employees”. Meant to reflect a sense of innovation and snazzy, creative style
- 80s: Rooms were named after creative artists – culture that breeds creativity and art

Physical layout

- Working environment was designed to correspond with aesthetic values

Communication patterns

- Interaction was informal – culture was relaxed and casual

Practices and behaviours

- Laser disc blasted out MJ in the lobby, staff wore jeans and sneakers; employees were young and dress codes unconventional; rock music was played at night and classical music during the day – laid-back, mellow culture
- Sculley sent out tickets to Indiana Jones movie to employees; fruit juice was provided free to employees; masseur was on call – friendly, rewarding culture that treated its employees well

Values, feelings, beliefs

- “Apple employees believe, somewhat self-righteously, that their mission is to bring computer literacy to the masses” – aspired to make their work a commonality
- Evangelical spirit, attitude that was “laid back and cocky”
- Ambitious, self-righteous, overconfident culture
- Values of entrepreneurialism, individual achievement, commitment, devotion to the company
- Culture that highlighted innovation and loyalty
- During mid-80s, employees who left from the Apple II division perceived the culture to become increasingly corporate in nature – the original casual, laid-back culture was something that was valued by employees

Integrationist theory

This theory by Schein suggests that the effectiveness of an organisation relies on the strength and uniformity of its culture – most notably consensus on the organization’s goals and the strategies on how to achieve them:

- Functionalist: that an organisation’s effectiveness is influenced by its culture
- A single, strong, uniform culture is better
- Provides a common set of values which enables members to work together
- Creates stability for the organisation
- Homogeneity, harmony and a unified culture are desirable
- Individual defiance is seen as a weakness
- Top down manifestation of culture by leaders, sometimes referred to as “engineering” due

to the deliberate manipulation of employees' individual values that sometimes occurs

- Helps organisation to function and be profitable
- However, strong cultures are difficult to change, so do not cope well in changing conditions

A culture that seemed to be unanimously enjoyed – laid-back, casual, perhaps fun, rewarding to its employees.

- Practices such as playing music during work and casual dress codes which reinforced the informal culture seem to be agreed upon by all – even Sculley switched out his suit for a more casual look
- Special treatment of employees, including handing out movie tickets and free fruit drinks, would obviously be enjoyed by everyone – a rewarding culture is a favourable one
- These practices and treatments were all management's idea – more specifically, it was Jobs who valued and attempted to cultivate such a culture, which created a lively atmosphere where new, innovative ideas flourished; it reflected his personality
- Those who left complaining that the culture was becoming increasingly corporate suggests that they preferred a culture that was less professional and formal, which was captured by Jobs' "unorthodox culture which typified Apple"

Differentiationist Theory

Martin et al.'s differentiationist theory argues that an organisation is comprised of a cluster of separate sub-cultures, each related to a particular challenge, task, or responsibility of a unit or group.

- Here, consensus is found not at the organisation level, but within each sub-culture, and relations between these sub-cultures may be complementary, conflicting, or independent
- Middle managers manage the different sub-cultures
- Boundary between inside and outside is permeable, sensitive to environmental influences
- Still functionalist, i.e. from management point of view

It was when the Apple II and Mac division were formed that two separate sub-cultures manifested under them

- Jobs claimed that Apple II was a "boring and dull product division" while at the same time revering the Mac division
- He clearly favoured the Mac division, despite the Apple II division making up the majority of profits, refusing to acknowledge the efforts of Apple II at the 1985 annual meeting
- This caused a drift between the two divisions and conflict to arise
- Culture would have been middle-managed by managers of each division
- Del Yocam, head of the Apple II division, found it hard to compete with Jobs, who had "12 percent of Apple's shares"; an employee revealed that "We used to say that the Mac people had God on their team" – the Apple II sub-culture felt an injustice, disadvantaged, less fortunate than the other division
- Employees of the Apple II division resented Jobs' lack of appreciation for their work, and several key personnel even exited the company

Critical Theory

The critical theory sheds light on the managerial biases of studies that serve the needs of management at the expense of other employees, and argues that culture is a means by which management may exert power over and control their employees.

- Implies that employees are unable or only partially able to notice the controls that management puts into place in order to manipulate them into adopting attitudes and behaviours that are contrary to their personal values
- Strongly unified culture = oppressive and successful control
- False consciousness where employees accept and approve of their own oppression
- Resistance may be met with peer pressure and punishment
- Pressure to conform

The casualness and informality of the Apple culture was formed by Jobs to create an environment for his employees that would inspire ideas that would contribute to the innovation and creativity of the Apple name and lead to job satisfaction for workers

- Rewarding employees with fruit juice, masseurs, and movie tickets done with the purpose of making employees feel valued and appreciated by the company, and also less stressed, so that turnover would be low
- The music, the casual dress codes created an informal culture wherein employees may feel as if they are more a part of a family; it improves the work place environment by alleviating stresses and pressures of corporate life
- The cockiness and self-righteousness fostered a culture of hubris; employees were ambitious, saw themselves as revolutionaries and felt the need to act as such; this allowed them to become more cohesive as work colleagues as it gave them a group sense of purpose, prompted them to come up with more inventive and innovative ideas, and encouraged them to reach for higher and more ambitious goals
- These qualities of free-flowing, outside the box thinking and flexibility are highly beneficial for a company such as Apple, which emphasises the importance of creativity and innovation, as well as adaptivity and change

Recommendations

Under differentiationist theory, the discrepancies between the treatments of each of the two sub-cultures is ultimately what led to a rift and conflict between them. There was an injustice in terms of the way the Mac division seemed to have “God on their team”, and this fostered resentment and bitterness within the Apple II division. The middle managers of each division were responsible for this situation. Jobs, leading the Mac division, and also being vice president, was always rewarding and commending the efforts of Mac, while neglecting Apple II entirely and even deeming it dull and boring. This was likely to give Mac a sense of arrogance and elitism towards the other division. Del Yocam, head of Apple II, likely cultivated a docile, submissive culture, reflective of his “softly spoken” nature. Hence this injustice was allowed to continue to the point where Apple II employees were fed up and had to leave. An integrationist culture may have therefore been more beneficial for Apple.

With a stronger, more unified culture, the two divisions would not have been pitted against one another in unfair competition and problems concerning employees feeling unappreciated and jealous would not have arisen. Jobs should have realised his position as vice president meant he needed to be more equitable towards all divisions of his company, even though he led Mac. He should have acknowledged the efforts of Apple II more during meetings and not excluded them entirely during the 1985 annual meeting. Equal treatment and acknowledgement should have been placed on both divisions so that they would feel less separated and against each other. Creating a sense of family and a more uniform, cohesive culture would have left Apple II employees not feeling disadvantaged or unappreciated, but as a necessary part of the overall Apple team. This kind of group unanimity would have worked better for employees to strive towards the overall goals of Apple as a whole, rather than their individual divisions. This would have prevented those several key personnel from leaving Apple altogether.

