[Frequently Asked Questions]

Organizational Culture & Structure - 2

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. What is Mixed Structure?

A1. Since we have been discussing the bases of departmentation, it is important to mention that pure types of organizations, where departmentation is purely following a single basis may not be found. For example, in an organization, primary basis of departmentation may be by geographic territory, or products, but at the lower levels within the divisions, there may be functionally separated departments. This combination of multiple bases of departmentation at various levels is known as mixed bases of departmentation.

Q2. Explain Matrix Structure.

A2. It is not merely a way to create departments, but once you read more about Matrix, you will be able to see the linkages. By definition; Matrix is a structure in which the reporting relationships between various departments and individuals are set up as a grid rather than as traditional hierarchy. Here, the principle of unity of command is not followed, and employees have dual reporting relationships. One of these two bosses is their functional head and the other is a project or product manager.

Example of matrix structure may be a large central air-conditioning company, which installs central air-conditioning systems as their clients' buildings are constructed. The primary dealing of the company with its clients is by projects or sites, and at every site they need experts who understand structural engineering, building design and architecture. They also need specialists who understand fabrication of ducts and air circulation. There needs to be an expert in cooling systems,

costing and finance, sales and marketing and so on. In a Matrix organization, the functional areas are maintained in traditional design, and their expertise is pooled for specific projects by project managers. Thus, every employee would report to project head while also reporting to functional head.

Advantages of this form include efficient utilization of resources and specialized skills, coordination of activities across projects and close attention to client needs, effective sharing of information and therefore effective decision-making, and adequate autonomy to work for the experts.

Limitations of this form include complex design and therefore possible confusion in the minds of employees, conflict between the two managers who may give conflicting or simultaneous instructions to the subordinate who may not know whom to prioritize, and possible political squabbles involving different projects and functions.

However, it should be noted that this form has become very popular in recent times because its hybrid nature allows for flexibility as well as efficiency.

Q3. Explain the dimensions of values of Organizational Culture.

A3. (1) Innovativeness: This dimension includes values of being innovative, open to new opportunities, risk taking, willing to experiment, being less careful and less rule-oriented.

(2) Stability: This dimension entails being rule oriented, valuing security, and stability.

(3) Attention to detail: This dimension contains the specific values of being precise and analytical.

(4) Respect for people: This dimension includes the values of emphasizing fairness, respecting people, and being tolerant.

(5) Team orientation: This dimension comprises the values of being people oriented, collaborative, and team oriented.

(6) Outcome orientation: This dimension encompasses the values of being achievement-, action-, and results-oriented.

(7) Aggressiveness includes the values of being high in competitiveness and low in social responsibility.

Q4. Define Organizational Culture.

A4. A pattern of basic assumptions – invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration – that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to the problems.
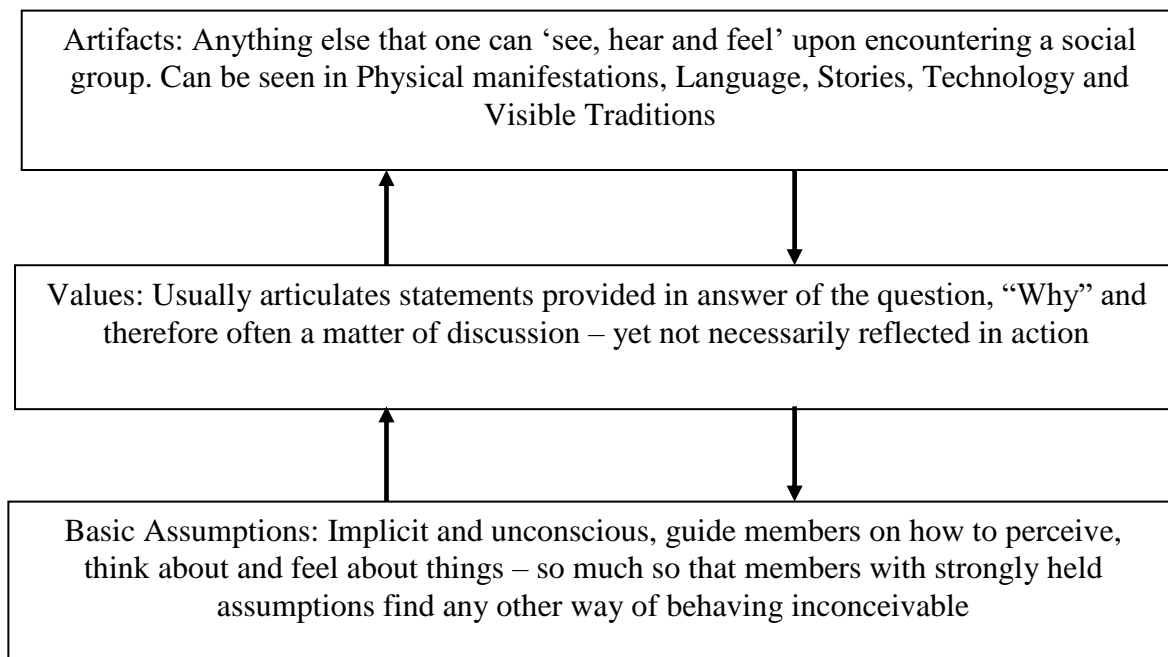
Q5. What is Organizational Culture?

A5. Organizational culture refers to the way things are done in an organization. The shared belief that 'this is our way to do things' that others do not have - often also translates as 'this is the right way to do things', because though different social groups might encounter the same kinds of basic problems, due to their circumstances they find solutions that are effective in their specific context. Thus what solution helps that group survive, grow, secure resources, compete effectively; is considered valuable enough to be passed on to the new members of the group. The culture evolves due to influences both, from within the group as well as outside the group. Feldman (1988) defined organizational culture as "a set of

meanings created within the organization but influenced by broader social and historical processes. Organizational members use these meanings – norms, roles, plans, ideals and ideas – to make sense out of the flow of actions and events they experience"

Q6. Show the relationship of levels of culture in an Organization.

A6.

| Artifacts: Anything else that one can 'see, hear and feel' upon encountering a social group. Can be seen in Physical manifestations, Language, Stories, Technology and Visible Traditions |

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| Values: Usually articulates statements provided in answer of the question, "Why" and therefore often a matter of discussion – yet not necessarily reflected in action |

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| Basic Assumptions: Implicit and unconscious, guide members on how to perceive, think about and feel about things – so much so that members with strongly held assumptions find any other way of behaving inconceivable |

Q7. Explain significance of Values in Organizational Culture.

A7. When compared to the basic assumptions, values are at a higher level of consciousness   and they reflect the members' shared opinion on 'how things should be'. When we say 'opinion', it means that when it comes to acting, these members may or may not act out of their values. The values help the organizational members classify situations and actions as either undesirable or desirable. The values seldom lead directly to basic assumptions even after the values are articulated, listed

and arranged according to their priority. The observer may only find that the values do not form a pattern, or that they are contradictory, or incongruent with observed behavior.

Q8. What are physical artifacts?

A8. Physical artifacts can be found through architecture and interior arrangements, physical space and its allocation and office design, decoration, manner of dressing and even mementoes and trophies awarded on chosen occasions.

Q9. How do language, stories and myths contribute in Artifacts?

A9. Language gives away culture through modes of speaking, levels and types of sound, slogans and special expressions

Stories and myths circulating among the staff indicates culture indicate what type of persons or acts are considered heroic, how certain types of situations to be handled, what should not be done, what happens in this organization if one acts in a particular way and so on. Especially interesting are the stories that narrate what happens in 'our' (or their) organization if a high status person breeches a rule, what happens if the organization has to choose between profits and people, what happens if you make a mistake around here/there. These stories can be about another-day-at-work-here, or about key events as well as about the past glory of the organization.

Q10. Explain Technology and Visible Traditions as part of Artifacts.

A10. Technology is also a part of culture, since it reflects and shapes the values and assumptions through the operations, materials and knowledge.

Visible traditions displayed at ceremonies and rituals, social practices, leadership practices and work traditions that show 'our way of doing things'.