



The Meaninglessness of Organizational Culture

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Why

- Much of the corporate world is fixated on the concept of organizational culture
- In academia alone there are 4,664¹ articles and **164**² definitions

I hypothesize that the prominence of the topic is a result of employees' basic order needs and resulting motivation for acceptance; while the organization is driven by a desire to regulate behavior.

As a result, the term is ultimately rendered meaningless and what's left is a question of what a better alternative might look like.

How

Extensive research and analysis of...



10 academic books



9 scholarly papers and journals

12 online articles and resources

3 well known organizations



Zappos

...was done to:

- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of existing academic theories
- Evaluate social behavior theories to account for the roles of behavior and motivation
- Apply the analyses to existing companies

A New Model for Defining Organizational Culture: What

Employee

Motivation

What needs cause employees to follow or adhere to organizational rules and norms.

Potential sources:

- Basic or higher order needs
- DNA / survival
- Conformity
- Loss aversion

Values Interpretation

Beliefs

Behavior

The way employees act as a result of embodying certain values and beliefs.

- Acts as an outcome and an input
- Bidirectional impact on the dynamic process to further iterate the resulting behavior

Organization

Motivation

An organization's desire to drive certain types of behavior that lead to specific business outcomes.

This can also be known as their MISSION and it may include:

- Behaviors
- Attitudes
- Business focus

Citations

¹http://www.lib.utexas.edu/

12(2), 1983, pp. 5-23.

²Sathe, V. "Implications of corporate culture: A

manager's guide to action." Organizational Dynamics,

Reward or Punish. Interpretation

Behavior

The way an organization incentivizes employees to act in the desired way.

- May be a result of positive reinforcement (reward) or negative (punishment)
- Impacts future behavior that employees experience

Gratitude

I would not have made it to this point without my husband, Paul Knepper's unwavering love and support; my son Brodie, being the best baby; the patience and encouragement of my family, friends and colleagues; the comradery of my cohort; and guidance of my HDO advisor, John Traphagan.

So...

Organizational culture:

- Fundamentally exists to drive a type of behavior that yields specific desired organizational
 - > This purpose is sometimes obscured by inconsistency of the term's meaning
- Has three components:
 - 1. Motivation
 - 2. A dynamic process of social construction whereby experiences are interpreted and then given significance
 - 3. Drives and is driven by behavior

These components have both independent and co-constructed impact and application for the employees and the organization:

1. Motivation

- Employees are motivated by need for belonging
- Organizations are motivated by desired outcomes (also known as their Mission)

2. The social construction process

- Involves beliefs or values for employees; reward or punishment for the organization
- Is used to drive desired behavior and in both cases has a recursive relationship with the resulting and evolving behavior

3. Behavior

- Ultimately ties back to meeting the original motivation
- Impacted by ongoing employee experiences

A better way forward:

• One unified definition of organizational culture: An organization has a mission that is tied to an incentive structure that supports behaviors to achieve that mission, as well as meet employee needs/motivation: Incentive

