The Meaninglessness of Organizational Culture

Stacey E. Winning, Master of Arts Candidate
Human Dimensions of Organizations, The University of Texas at Austin

Why

- Much of the corporate world is fixated on the concept of organizational culture
- In academia alone there are 4,664 articles and 164 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...

- 12 online articles and resources
- 10 academic books
- 9 scholarly papers and journals
- 3 well known organizations

Google NETFLIX 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>A New Model for Defining Organizational Culture:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong>&lt;br&gt;What needs cause employees to follow or adhere to organizational rules and norms.&lt;br&gt;Potential sources:&lt;br&gt;• Basic or higher order needs&lt;br&gt;• Conformity&lt;br&gt;• Loss aversion</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Beliefs or Values</strong>&lt;br&gt;Significance or Experience</td>
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<td><strong>Behavior</strong>&lt;br&gt;The way employees act as a result of embodying certain values and beliefs.&lt;br&gt;• Acts as an outcome and an input&lt;br&gt;• Bidirectional impact on the dynamic process to further iterate the resulting behavior</td>
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<th>Organization</th>
<th><strong>Motivation</strong>&lt;br&gt;An organization’s desire to drive certain types of behavior that lead to specific business outcomes.&lt;br&gt;This can also be known as their MISSION and it may include:&lt;br&gt;• Behaviors&lt;br&gt;• Attitudes&lt;br&gt;• Business focus</th>
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<td><strong>Reward or Punish</strong>&lt;br&gt;Significance or Experience</td>
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<td><strong>Behavior</strong>&lt;br&gt;The way an organization incentivizes employees to act in the desired way:&lt;br&gt;• May be a result of positive reinforcement (reward) or negative (punishment)&lt;br&gt;• Impacts future behavior that employees experience</td>
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Citations


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 comradeship 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 outcomes
  - 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: