

Workplace culture and its impact on organisational efficiency

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Executive summary

In these times when the COVID-19 pandemic has spread around the world the humanity must rethink their own status, the organisations to take proper steps to implement those strategies what will help them to survive and the governments to accounting if they were quick enough to react in proper manner to this disease.

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Introduction

The aim of this report is to analyse how do broader external environmental factors along with COVID-19 affect organisational culture and its performance by critically assesses the workplace culture of the organization using appropriate environmental and organisational analysis technics. In this work around the COVID-19 will be discuss in overall about this pandemic inside cultures. The writer chosen organisation is FirstPort Limited trading estate property management. The main office of the organisation is Queensway House, 11 Queensway, New Milton, Hampshire, BH25 5NR. FirstPort with over 40 year 's experience is the largest residency property management company in the UK with more than 196.000 homes in 3.900 developments and with 3.200 employees and they work with developers, investors, freeholders and more than 300 resident management companies. FirstPort maintain five core values such as friendly, inventive, respectful, skilled and trustworthy by which the priority is being open and honest, to gain, grow and maintain customers trust. The history of FirstPort started in 2002 when the organisation name was Launchcoin limited and became incorporation of a private limited company, in 2009 the company has changed its name to Perevel Property Management Group, in 2015 the company has changed its name to FirstPort limited (Endole, 2021). The property management industry is huge taking in consideration that based on data from 2020 there were 3590k homes in London. In addition, in 2020 the Association of Residential Managing Agents estimates the average service charge bill in London is between £1800 and £ 2000. Taking in consideration these numbers this market dealing with an estimate amount between £4.7 - £6.8 billion a year. At the same time taking in consideration the 196.000 homes managed by FirstPort with an average of £1900 service charge it gives £372m per year. FirstPort has seven competitors in the market and its revenue is ranked the 4th among the top 10 companies. FirstPort was one of those organisations who were run during the first lockdown. It was a huge necessity for their services, so the employees became essential workers. Some of the developments looks like some mini cities about the size (2.300 flats) of the site so these mini cities must be managed continuously. One of them is Hendon lakeview site the workplace of the writer. In this work the writer will take in consideration theories and models such as PESTEL analysis and Hofstede cultural dimension and will see how these environmental scanning tools will help in critical evaluation of the broader environment in which FirstPort operates and its impact in organisation culture and performance. Furthermore, will be critically evaluate that FirstPort and personal cultural and ethical standards such as values and beliefs are sustainable and helpful to achieve corporate objectives and social responsibilities.

1.0 Environmental scanning tools and techniques

As it was mentioned before in this part of the work the writer will speak about theories and models what will help to identify organisational risks, opportunities, threats and all these both from internal and external environments. One of these models are PESTEL analysis which help to determine the external factors that can affect organisational operation or to be aware of risks, limitations, opportunities. These factors are political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal what can be both positive and negative. Another tool is Hofstede's cultural five dimension which help to analyse how an organisation management is affected by differences between cultural groupings in cross-cultural comparisons across countries. In another words it shows the effect of a society culture (organisational culture) on the values of its individuals and how these values associate with specific behaviours. These five dimensions are power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individual vs group, masculine vs feminine and short-term vs long term.

1.1 PESTEL analysis

Pestel analysis is one of the most used models to identify both positive and negative aspects of an organisation environmental position. Regarding with the current pandemic example the lock downs are a huge impact to organisations. Many citizens around the world are still blaming them own government about the slow and passive response to the pandemic and this effect of COVID-19 may conduct to extended political disappointment between civilians. Many organisations and countries have been realised the vulnerability of their supply chain on others, especially regarding on medical stuff (face masks). The COVID-19 pandemic has been affected and still affect many organisations worldwide by economic stagnation or decrease and unemployment. According to (Office for national statistics, 2020) the A02NSA: Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity for people aged 16 and over and aged from 16 to 64, in 2020 the July-September quarter shows 1.674.000 people without work. Taking in consideration the beginning of the pandemic and counting the 2020, January-March quarter what shows 1.328.000 unemployed is visible the impact of pandemic with a raising of 19% in the peoples who loses them jobs. Of course, this numbers are just margining the truth so probably the unemployment rate is much higher. The present pandemic has taught this generation and organisations to pay more attention on safety importance and lifestyle attitudes. According to Group, A. (2020) many people who were forced to live in camps by different disasters and conflicts are more vulnerable than those from general population about the impact of COVID-19. These factors have forced 33.4 million people to be internal in these camps from 145 countries in 2019. The organisations must redefine the safety importance not just for employees, employers, customers but for environment too. Those organisations who are unable to adapt themselves with these changed circumstances will not be able to remain in the market. Many organisations have responded to the COVID-19 environmental changes by automation doors, gates, security checks to mitigate the spread of disease. Furthermore, many other organisations been innovating in other ways such as plastic panels, disinfectants and so on for the same

reason. Furthermore, as it appears this pandemic has been affecting more the tourism industry by not allowed to travel abroad to mitigate the infection and through this many small hotels, boarding house, restaurants been ceased. As it appears many laws has been introduced since the pandemic started and in spite all these laws, they were not able to protect the jobs and even lives. In these circumstances is identifiable and necessary for organisations to use and be aware with the importance of these factors and in general with the PESTEL analysis. These examples are stood to see how crucial role is playing in this pandemic the PESTEL analysis for countries and organisations to determine those factors what are affect not just their but our future. Each time when between one of these factors may occur any changes the organisation must review through PESTEL analysis. One of this change what been affected more factors not just one is COVID-19. It is good to be aware about these changes because from this one depends the organisation next direction or movements. It is good to know those external factors what can affect the organisation, why they have so influence on the company and how much of impact will experience the organisation. While in an optimal case the organisation has time to do research in the case of COVIC-19 it seems that nobody was ready for such an impact.

1.2 Hofstede cultural dimension

Hofstede cultural dimension is about how management is affected by differences between cultural groupings in cross cultural comparisons across countries, this dimension is about collective programming of the mind based on values, norms and rules determining what is good or wrong regard behaviour. As it seems these five dimensions embrace human's everyday lives, the relations between them. Some of these dimensions shows human attitude to authority or hierarchy which helps to understand how and where an individual stand relating the unequally distributed power in a specific society. It is kind a mirror what show how an individual act and react. Regarding with COVID-19 in this field is visible a small transition due that even the managers and CEO-s realised that are vulnerable too. According to (Ghana News Agency, 2020) diseases such as COVID-19 do not care about humans, organisations, nations – it just destroying markets, and lives from each background, race, nationality. This dimension help to identify how employees can adapt or not themselves to management, how can accept or how cannot accept the hierarchy into organisation. Example how can adapt themselves to the situation when an unpopular or unfriendly colleague became them manager. Or even a manager how can lead a team if is not accessible? Both the managers and employees must learn the way to be able to cooperate with each other. The next way how Hofstede's cultural dimension can help is to identify the tolerance and cultural acceptance level in organisation. Many Asian nations at the beginning of outbreak are shut the country, economy and strict quarantine has been introduce while western societies such U.S.A. been trivialize the COVID-19 graveness (Huynh, 2020, pp. 1 – 7). In the XXI century many companies must merges to be able to survive. In these conditions many employees start to overthink the new situation, some of them can cope some of them not. In this situation

is easy to determine a person tolerance degree. Regarding COVID-19 many individuals were not able to cope even with the lockdown, with the situation that they must stay at home and I have not mentioned it here yet those ones who were lost their jobs. As it seems an impact in the daily routine and human life is getting disordered and the media is always ready to raise this tolerance degree. Another affected area in the daily routine is the religion worldwide and is visible through the religious leaders conduct, attitudes and ceremony of worshippers and the attempt to explain or to provide theological significance for this situation (Gerstenfeld, 2020, pp. 11 – 14). Another aspect or dimension is when the achievement is in the focus rather than individual goals or careers. It is more than obvious that in these circumstances the collectivism it gains more space than individualism at the same time the individualism is more important regarding connections and through this avoiding the infection of coronavirus. It is hard to predict, regarding a workplace with 500 employees what will gain priority however, the well-known social distancing in such an environment is impossible. In this segment no one will be able to differentiate between these two terms regarding advantage and disadvantage of it during the pandemic. Regarding the masculine and feminine aspect is an interesting factor that males see the work as challenge but what happen if they cannot work about the lockdown, there is no challenge? Females are in better situation due that they can maintain the relationship with them husbands.... At the same time if the females are work, they are in trouble about the social pandemic. These scenarios lead to an interesting question regarding dimension culture who will be able to deal better with the pandemic, males or females? Probably the time will be the answer to this question. There is another aspect in Hofstede's cultural dimension referring to time. These aspects lead to an individual or organisation orientation, what can be short or long. Since the pandemic is present many organisations has changed them own strategy, for some of them is strenuous even to stay alive, they are set up to survive, some of them are flourish in special the online companies, they are able to set up long term plans. In another aspect the long-term orientation can be to achieve business results may take time and this fact must be accepted or each employee would like a long work relationship with the organisation. Short-term orientation could be that some results can be achieved within a specific period. As it seems there are many factors what can influence both individual and organisational. Above it was discussed only two of the theories through couple of experiences that could lead to the writer organisation too. These theories and models can help in everyday life of an organisation to determine both the negative and positive aspect of a gap. At the same time other experiences shows how a culture can be measured and how cultural differences matter. Employees from high-context culture working in the same rhythm can reduce the opportunity of confrontation as well as low-context cultures. According to (Khelif, 2016.) less labourer loyalty and high staff fluctuation is the result of nonconformist organisations employees can enhance on no long-term opportunistic behaviour toward their work. Cultural differences shape every aspect of global economy. At the same time there are many great examples of organisation cultures such as Zappos (complementing the right people with the right culture), Disney (the happiest place on earth being the happiest place to work), Google (a corporate culture that employees stand by), Twitter (where fun meets inspiration to bring out the best) and so on. These organisations can hear what the cultures

necessity is, what are those factors what can lift a culture over organisation. Even in the middle of pandemic the organisations and its employees can work together to achieve and to make the workplace a place where nobody will work again. Never before was so high demand between management and team to be draw closer to each other, to try to understand the other parties regarding organisational cultural level. Never before was sharpened the situation such as now, when is crucial to understand that an organisation cannot survive only if management and team are working shoulder to shoulder to be able to build business models and flexible cultures, to adapt to the new circumstances with positive results and to build again the economy.

2.0 Critical organisational evaluation

In this part of the work will critically evaluate the writer's organisational culture performance with the tools mentioned above and the COVID-19 impact on the organisation culture and performance. According to (Kim and Chang, 2019, p. 78) to take a broad long-time approach in managing cultural assessments, the managers should involve in two-sided communication and system edifice for prosperous institutional progression and amendment. Taking in consideration that FirstPort play a significant role in the estate operational management they must be aware of both internal and external environmental changes.

2.1 Critical organisational evaluation by PESTEL analysis

Regarding the political changes the widest part it takes the Brexit due that majority of employees are not native British, and the organisation been required from each of them to proof them rights to work. A small percent of employees was not able to proof it therefore the organisation redeemed from them. Another political impact on organisation was the rise of COVID-19. Fortunately, FirstPort is an ongoing service-based organisation so many of the employees became essential workers during the lockdown. So FirstPort it was affected in one way by political factors, due that the organisation has a contract with Barrat Property development, one of the highest quality major national housebuilder, FirstPort managed all estates build by Barrat. During the pandemic, the construction been stopped by lockdown therefore, in this time FirstPost was not able to grow its investments. However, the organisation was able to continue the daily life routine with minor interruptions such as no available contractors, management worked from home, so it was not so easy to manage the team, but the teams were committed to do their best. As it seems PESTLE analysis is helpful for leaders to install a plan and highlight on their strategy and inner assets even when they cannot have impact on the external circumstances (Nandonde, 2019, p. 55). So FirstPort economic factors regarding COVID-19 been drawn from the political factors too. However, it was a significant business achievement record that FirstPort been joining forces with Mainstay Group to deliver the best property and asset

management services. Despite the pandemic and because the stagnation of the market FirstPort was able to expand. The social factors into the organisation has suffered the greatest damage, but probably not just to the FirstPort. The lockdown has been affected all the social activities to the organisation because closely each employee has got the virus and, in this context, where one where another must isolate itself to protect the rest of the staff. There was once the case that there was only one employee and one manager at the site. The toughest it was that the team cannot be the same as before the pandemic. Another significant impact on team during the pandemic and with social distancing is the fact that most of the team is from high context culture background which is mean that the relationship between these colleagues is based on intense communication and social interaction. The social distancing it was a torture for them, the management was under the necessity to check them often to make sure that the team does not break these rules. There was another negative aspect of these rules namely the team before pandemic it used to take breakfast and lunch together, which during the COVID-19 has been changed. The management must take preventive actions to enforce this by closing the kitchen from the old office and allow to use the new office kitchen where the management is working. In this way it was controllable the breakfast and lunch for team. Untold stories or matters been unexplained and left the culture to explain them in high-context culture. In high-context culture couple of words can transmit a complex story or message efficiently to another high-context culture individual (Leal et al, 2018, p. 193). There are many crucial factors what has technological impact during the pandemic such as the management meetings goes online, the communication such as induction and training with staff been changed to whats'up teams, those ones what required personal contact been done taking in consideration social distancing. However, the team communication set up by whats'up meet couple of obstacles. One of these is the lack of field strength which makes many misunderstandings. The pictures did not come through regarding some tasks or even the messages too however, the management sent them. Sometime the answers do not hit the management and here it was not mentioned those occasions when one or more of the staff been worked at basement or lower basement. The team members had two opportunities, or they gone into their kitchen where the messages go through by wifi, or to find out that point in the site where the internet by service provider works. Finally, the management bought walkie-talkies for the staff so by this couple of the problems been removed. The only issue what remained is that by walkie-talkie the management cannot send pictures to clarify tasks. Overall, the management and team been worked together well regarding technology issues. Further main skills were technological, and the auxiliary skills that was mainly occupied with distant and frequently non simultaneous message (Graham, 2018, p. 18). The pandemic has many environmental effects on the world. One of the most common it was the air purification due the lockdowns by which many carbon footprints was stopped. At Hendon lakeview the organisation does not deal with this kind of problems due that all machinery is electrified. However, it was another environmental issue namely the lockdown which makes (or force) the residents to stay home. That in itself would not have been a problem but due that the free movement was restricted and only daily once was allowed to go out for exercise the residents been produce much more litter than before pandemic. Taking in consideration that the

team was essential worker the working hours remain the same together with the daily duties. Next to all this the residents has more time to complain about the litter which been removed many times in a daily basis. The problem occurred when the teams shift ended at afternoon and when the residents been littering too till late evening. With this act they did not realised that attract more rodent, birds and foxes. Next day the team exercise has started with litter picking. Finally, when the lockdown went over slowly, slowly the uninvited fauna has left. How the humankind fight with COVID-19 the daily movement of humankind been stopped by lockdown the air pollution been dropped parallel with this activity (Bherwani, et al, 2020, p. 683). The legal aspect of the COVID-19 it was another milestone for many organisations. For Hendon lakeview too however, fortunately FirstPort has been responded so quickly to this requirement. First, the concierge desk was shielded to avoid direct contact with residents, secondly it was provided many masks, gloves and hand sanitisers. Together with all of these the organisation has achieved to become essential workplace and provided proof letters for the team. It is well identifiable that the organisation has quick reactions to these problems.

2.2 Critical organisation evaluation by Hofstede cultural dimension

Regarding Hofstede's cultural dimension it is clearly visible the organisational positive attitude to authorities. Regarding the team it was necessary a transition period to be able to adapt themselves to the new rules. To understand the reason is good to mention that the non-manager team are from high-context culture but not the same country. The manager team are both from high- and low-context culture. One of the problems was the acceptance of duties from a low-context culture manager. According to Leal et al, (2018, p. 193) ...more information will be transmitted in low-context culture (for better understanding) as well as references to their sentiments than in high-context cultures. It was light but visible the tension even between the managers. Those managers who were from low-context culture been dealing better with the pandemic however, those from high-context culture less. The last group managers have understood better the team regarding tasks than the first group managers. Therefore, after a long conversation between team and managers the tasks were delegate by the managers from high-context culture. Sometime the problem has occurred from the misunderstanding between the low-context culture manager and team. It was interesting because before pandemic these misunderstanding problems has been cleaned quickly however, of course the managers too could be under pressure by many things such as lockdown, worries about the rest of the family, worries about themselves regarding the virus. It was not easy to cope with all of these during the pandemic. One of the Hofstede's aspect it was clearly outlined namely that the whole team was achievement oriented and nobody cared about personal goals. At the same time there are more males than females at Hendon lakeview which is interesting from one aspect namely that in these circumstances the only challenge was to survive the pandemic for both males and females. Another interesting point is that the males coped easier with the pandemic than females. The survival timescale in this case is

daily what mean that the team tried to subsist each day of work and probably the FirstPort perspective it was the same however, due that the organisation has been react in time with proper steps insures to overlive too. However, the question remains if FirstPort would not take the steps what it does where will be now. At the same time is interesting to see that high-context culture countries have been shut their national economy through lockdown and quarantine right after outbreak while the low-context culture countries it seems they trivialise the pandemic (Huynh, 2020, p. 1).

3.0 Conclusion

As it seems these circumstances such as COVID-19, lockdown, face covering, social distancing, hand sanitiser and so on has a significant huge impact over economy, organisations and peoples. The unemployment has skyrocketed above the clouds destroying millions of workplaces and lives. The markets have fallen into deep cave resulting in huge crash for many organisations. All over the world countries has pump billions in them own economy to avoid the chaos. Organisations tried to survive by implementing all their knowledge to shield the employees to provide a safe workplace in these critical times. Finally, the National Health Services around the world has face with the more severe pandemic ever in the history of modern medicine. Many governments pump billions in armament to be ready for defended themselves from other humans of from an interplanetary attack. However, one the smallest living organism forces the world into knees with all their armies. The world got a lesson, and the humans' responsibility is to draw the conclusion of it. The politicians to provide more sources to the health cares and medicine research, the organisations to think ahead and to have reserves. The humankind to understand how vulnerable is, and to think about them role in this world. Finally, the world must be ready for the worst-case scenario to be able to deal with problems such as COVID-19. At present the world must win the permanent activity from nations and states to interrogate humanity to fulfil the social distancing as coercive legality (Huynh, 2020, p. 6). The PESTEL analysis will help to do so the proper steps to implement the best plan to avoid the worst. Hofstede's cultural dimension can help to learn from each other, one culture to another, to understand themselves better and to find the best way to cooperate with each other. At Hendon lakeview the team has got the lesson too and the management and non-management team has decided to implement many steps to help each other even if are from different background.

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