



Charles Handy's “Four Culture Theory”

Short Introduction



The companies that survive longest are the one's that work out what they uniquely can give to the world not just growth or money but their excellence, their respect for others, or their ability to make people happy. Some call those things a soul.

- Charles Handy

- ▶ Charles Handy CBE (born 1932) is an Irish philosopher specializing in organizational behavior and management.
- ▶ Education – Bromsgrove School; Oriel College, Oxford
teaching at London Business School in 1972 – 1995 (professor 1978 – 1994)
1 year of observation at MIT
- ▶ Rated among the “Thinkers 50” – list of most influential management thinkers
- ▶ July 2006 – honorary Doctor of Laws – Trinity College, Dublin
- ▶ Major ideas – “portfolio worker”, “Shamrock Organization”, “Four Culture Theory”
(En.wikipedia.org, 2020)



Charles Handy (1976) together with Roger Harrison (1972) linked organization structure to organizational culture describing 4 types of culture:

Power Culture – power focused on a small group of people or a central figure where the control flows from the middle, similar to a spider's web

Role Culture – highly defined structure, hierarchical bureaucracies, strict roles, represented as a “Roman building with pillars”;

Task Culture – power concentrated on specialized teams formed for specific tasks, highly skilled individuals, matrix-like structure;

Person Culture – individuals believe themselves superior to the company;

(Ruiz, E. 2009)

Google Organizational Culture

- ▶ Organizational structure
 - ▶ - Function – based definition
 - ▶ grouping of resources and processes based on business function;
 - ▶ - Product – based definition
 - ▶ Google's products are developed through the support of product-based groups in the company's corporate structure
 - ▶ - Flatness
 - ▶ through its flatness, the company's organizational structure enables employees, teams, and groups to bypass middle management and communicate directly with upper management;

(Ashkenas et al., 2015)

Google has a ***cross-functional organizational structure***. In essence, this structure is of the matrix type. (Alphabet.Inc – Form 10-K). From here we can link Google's organizational structure to its type of culture. Comparing Google's type of culture with Handy's theory, it can be classified under the Task Culture. The "flatness" part of the organizational structure links Google's culture directly to Handy's Task culture - the company's organizational structure enables employees, teams, and groups to bypass middle management and communicate directly with upper management. Also, in this way, Google's corporate structure facilitates meetings and sharing of information among employees and teams belonging to different areas of the organization. (Panmore Institute, 2020)

Google Organizational Culture - continued

- ▶ Openness
- ▶ Innovation
- ▶ Excellence that comes with smartness
- ▶ Hands-on approach
- ▶ Small-company-family rapport

(About.google, 2020)

Openness - dissemination of valuable knowledge that can support further innovation; the corporate culture motivates individual employees to interact with each other at various times of their typical workday, as a way of improving the knowledge they use in their jobs

Innovation - The company's organizational culture motivates employees to contribute to the overall innovation of the business and its products;

Excellence - training programs are designed to motivate workers to continually improve their output, and to not settle for mediocre results. In this regard, Google's corporate culture promotes smartness in the workforce, and pushes employees to strive for excellent work;

Hands-on approach - using experiential learning as an effective way of improving employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities

Small-company-family rapport - Google maintains a warm work environment where employees can easily talk and share ideas with each other.

(Panmore Institute, 2020)

Conclusion and recommendations

- ▶ A potential improvement to Google's authoritative culture is the further heightening of data sharing. At present, despite the fact that the organization's social qualities bolster interchanges and data sharing, such sharing happens in a controlled way. Google can expand representatives' level of opportunity right now, boost the speed and productivity of information move. This suggestion intends to build the pace of advancement in the organization's item improvement forms. Likewise, Google can improve its corporate culture through extra imaginative projects that are intended to help specific capacities among singular workers. This suggestion intends to build workers' information, aptitudes, and capacities to improve.

▶ (Elsbach and Stigliani, 2018)

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