

LCLM 5005: Organisational Culture
Component 1: Organisational Culture: Individual Report
Title: Organisational culture of British Airways

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1. Introduction

Organisational culture is the shared set of values, beliefs, attitudes, and core behaviours that shape how people work together and make decisions in a company. As depicted by N Reiss (2026), organisational culture is crucial for firms to drive employee engagement, decrease staff turnover and boost overall operational productivity.



Figure 1: Logo of the firm

(Source: British Airways, 2026)

British Airways PLC (BA) is the flag carrier airline of the UK, established in 1974 and headquartered in London. BA primarily provides scheduled passenger and air-cargo transportation service, tour operations and aircraft maintenance (British Airways, 2026). Key offerings include global flight networks, vacation packages, and specialised cabin classes. The firm has approximately 41,700 employees worldwide and the firm achieved an operating profit of 2,230 million for full-year 2025.

2. Evaluation of the way the organisational culture influences British Airways' structure and decision- making processes

Culture is reinforced through systems of rites and rituals, patterns of communication, informal organisations, expected patterns of behaviour, and perceptions of the psychological contract (Mullins and Christy, 2016). Power culture, role culture, task culture and person culture are key types of organisational culture that influence firms' decision-making. Role culture and task culture influence organisational structure and the decision-making process of British Airways.

Role Culture in structure and decisions

Role culture supports BA by providing clear job definitions, strict adherence to safety rules and stable hierarchical coordination. This environment ensures that employees understand their specific duties and precise reporting lines across the UK's business operations. According to Yonga, (2026), goal-setting theory focuses on specific and challenging goals, paired with regular feedback, leading to higher performance and better motivation than easy or vague goals. Core principles of goal-setting theory are clarity, challenge, commitment, and feedback and task complexity. BA's organisational information, guidelines, and goals flow systematically from the board of directors to executive managers and individual departments, and this highlights the "clarity" principle. The firm's supervision is maintained across departments to keep standards high and uniform, aligning with the "commitment" principle.

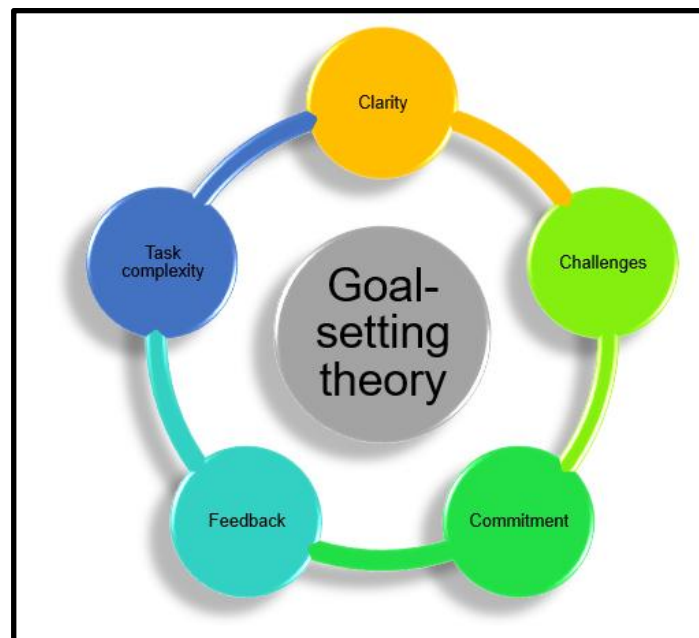


Figure 2: Goal-setting Theory

In the context of BA's decision-making process, the executive team and senior directors provide feedback on employees' performance and collect opinions to maintain operations, and this showcase the "feedback and task complexity" principle. For example, BA enforces strict employee rules and procedures primarily through the "IAG Code of Conduct," "British Airways Standing Instructions (BASI)" and "Specific Appearances and Uniform Standards" (Kapila, 2025). In addition, the firm has followed a *task-culture blend*, such as project-based or task-oriented work, which occasionally complements the core role culture to empower teams for business operations.

Task Culture in structure and decisions

Task culture seeks to bring together the right resources and people and utilises the unifying power of the group. Task culture at BA combines with role culture to support matrix structure and goal-driven decision-making. It empowers cross-functional teams to solve specific operational problems, while maintaining clear lines of hierarchical authority. Task culture supports BA's executive body to make quick decisions based on ground realities. Employees feel trusted to handle consumers and project needs that enhance consumers' satisfaction. For example, BA passenger numbers and traffic have steadily increased after the pandemic, reaching roughly 39.8 million passengers (Statista, 2020). Therefore, the task culture has supported the firm to make effective decisions to enhance their brand opportunities.

In the context of structure, the firm focused on developing cross-functional teams to handle BA's business goals and operations. Task culture influences BA operations and this splits into major functional divisions such as flight operations, engineering, commercial, consumer experiences, and human resources to manage business operations. BA uses a functional and hierarchical structure to improve operational efficiency, ensure strict safety accountability, and manage specialised tasks in the marketplace. The key reasons include specialised task deployments, clear lines of accountability and faster decision-making for business operations. The overall finding highlighted that the firm has followed a role and task culture, which influences the firm in decision-making and development of organisational structure. The firm successfully increases consumers' satisfaction by providing standard service quality, improving its business opportunities in the marketplace. However, the firm's decision-making capabilities are slow, and bureaucracy reduces flexibility to manage operations. In addition, low employee morale among BA employees means they have fewer opportunities in strategic decision-making, which is a disadvantage for the firm in its operations.

3. The way organisational culture can be identified within British Airways and determine the prevailing culture

Schein's Model

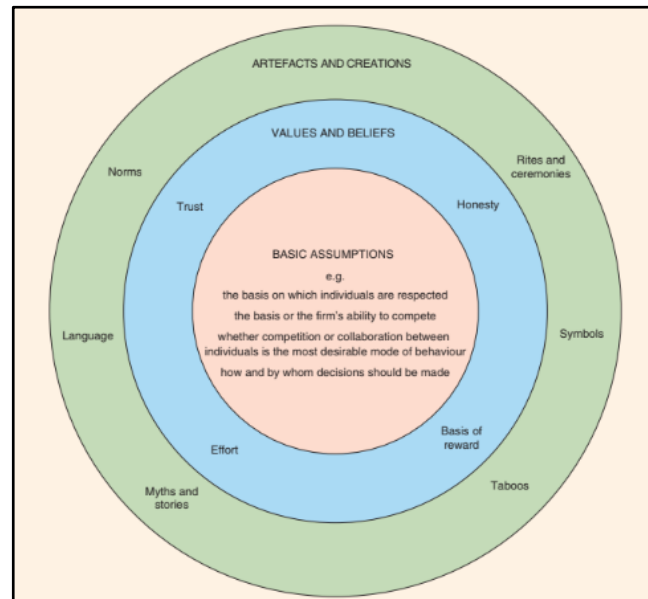


Figure 3: Schein's level of culture Model

(Source: Mullins and Christy, 2016)

Schein's level of culture model is a framework that breaks organisational culture into three tiers, including artefacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions. "Artefacts tier" focuses on spaces and layout, technological output and the overt behavioural aspect of group members. In the context of BA, tangible elements such as aircraft liveries, corporate uniforms, airports, lounges, and formal corporate structure have advantages in operations. The firm has shifted from cold, militaristic, and bureaucratic symbols of state ownership to warm, open and customer-focused environments during the "Putting People First" campaigns (British Airways, 2026). The "Espoused values" provide solutions, work, and assistance to new work to manage conceptual processes. BA officially declared strategies and goals centred on safety, warmth, open-mindedness, styles and delivering a "big British welcome" (British Airways, 2026). The firm's leadership actively promotes teamwork, valuing employees' diversity and creates unique consumer experiences to improve its business opportunities. "Basic underlying assumptions" stage guides actual behaviour and determines how group members perceive, think, and feel about things. BA overcame old assumptions of internal bureaucracy and entitlement, replacing them with shared, tacit beliefs that support employees' engagement and commercial success.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede's cultural dimension theory explains that a society's culture influences the values, behaviours, and mind-set of its members. Six factors of this model are "Power Distance Index", "Individualism versus collectivism", "Masculinity versus Femininity", "Uncertainty Avoidance", "Long-term orientation," and "Indulgence versus Restraint." BA has operated in the UK and France market and evaluated its cultural division in the market.

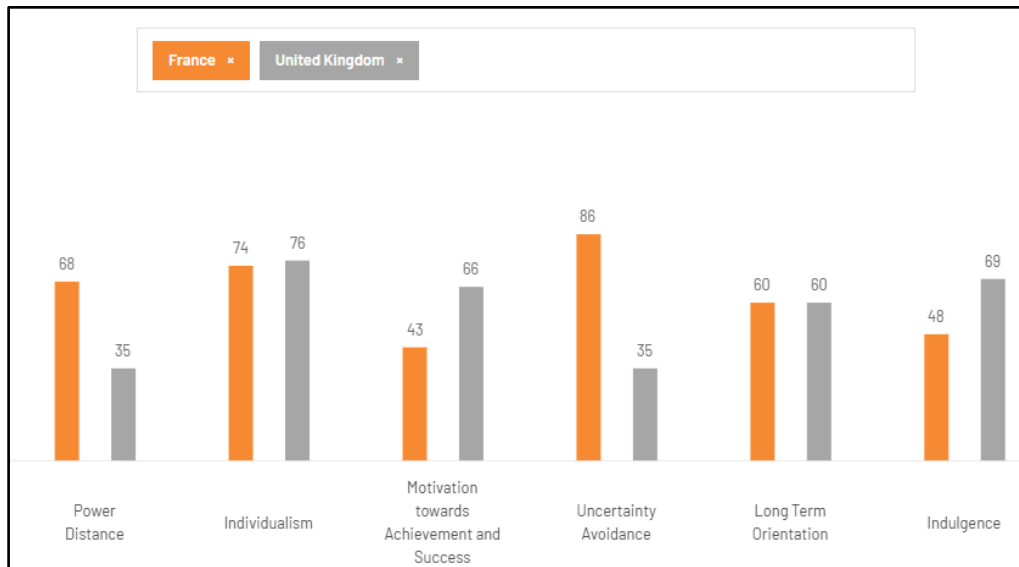


Figure 4: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

(Source: The Culture Factor, 2020)

Power Distance Index (PDI)

France scores high (68), indicating a preference for centralised control, formal authority and rigid corporate hierarchies. UK scores low (35), favouring decentralised decision-making, consultative leadership, and informal manager-employee relations. In the UK, the firm encourages a more egalitarian workplace where employees feel comfortable questioning authority, and promotes open dialogue between staff and management. In France, BA reflects a greater acceptance of a more traditional organisational hierarchy, formalised structure and responsibilities centralised management control.

Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)

France scored very high (86), highlighting high anxiety regarding ambiguity and a strong reliance on bureaucratic rules and processes. The UK scored low (35), displaying high tolerance for unstructured situations, adaptability, and individual career progression. In the UK, BA adopts commercial flexibility, commercial risk tolerances, and customer-led operational tweaks. In France, BA favours clear regulatory frameworks, formal processes and centralised corporate planning for its operations.

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory is a psychological theory and sociological theory that helps to interpret people's behavioural relationships by using cost-benefit analyses to determine risks and benefits for organisational growth. According to Xu *et al.*, (2026), Social Exchange Theory principles are “reciprocity, subjective evaluation of outcomes and reinforcement.”

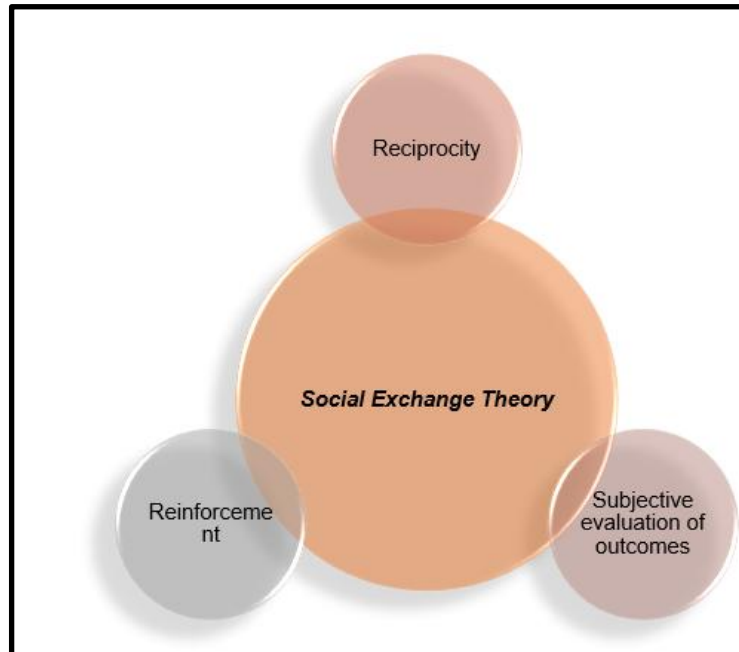


Figure 5: Social Exchange Theory

BA employees deliver high-touch services, and safety companies expect fair pay, job security, and psychological backing from management, which is influenced by the “reciprocity” principle. Staff designs the training input and emotional labour against organisational rewards such as recognition programmes and clear progression, influenced by the “subjective evaluation of outcomes” principle. The firm’s management provides an initiative to hire skilled employees in order to reduce traditional hierarchical control, trading pure top-down culture for a mutual value deal between crew and management, embodied in “reinforcement.” In the context of BA, it determines prevailing culture; employees trade empathetic care and professional excellence for job stability and cultural alignment in business expansions. Despite people-oriented values, operational necessities maintain strong functional hierarchies, creating a mix of supportive collaboration to manage the workforce and task-oriented control.

4. The way British Airways leverages its culture to adapt to external environment influences

Increased competition influences investing in technology

Increased competition in the UK aviation sector is driven by regional investment, emerging technology integration and low-cost carrier dynamics. The “Mordor Intelligence” report highlighted that the market value is projected to reach \$7.94 billion (5.97 billion GBP) by 2031, with operators adapting to shifting passenger demands and strict environmental mandates (Mordor Intelligence, 2022). The impact of high competition in the aviation market has spurred BA to develop a strategy to maintain its position. For example, BA focused its 2025 technology and culture transformation on a £7 billion overall modernisation plan, featuring £100 million in operational resilience investments in AI, machine learning and a people-first culture shift (CDO Magazine, 2025). The reason for the investment is that BA tries to provide digital training for employees to utilise the operational App for crewmembers to satisfy consumer demand in the market.

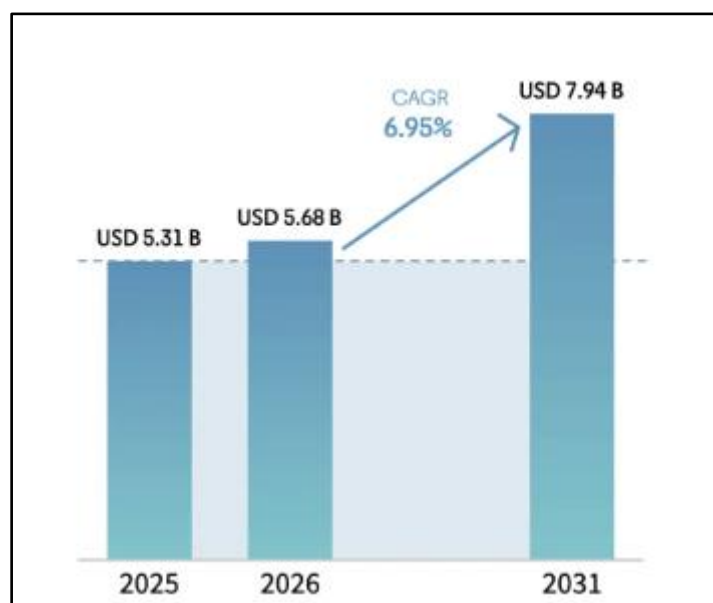


Figure 6: UK Aviation sector and share analysis

(Source: Mordor Intelligence, 2022)

Digital transformation influences improving customer service quality

Digital transformation in the aviation sector is reshaping operations through AI, biometric passenger processing and predictive maintenance. These tools improve safety, cut down delays, and create smoother travel ways for booking on arrival in the market. BA is implementing a £7 billion multi-year transformation programme featuring key digital and AI tools such as redesigned customer apps, cloud migration and a predictive maintenance system to increase consumer satisfaction rates.

Mobile application features include real-time journey updates, passport scanning, biometric profile management and expanded self-services capabilities, which allow passengers to alter plans independently. The firm's management focuses on the E-Logs system that replaces paper logs with specialised aircraft iPads, transmitting real-time fault data to ground to pre-order parts before landing. These digital transformations not only benefit the firm's operational performance but also influence consumers to book their tickets with this airline.

Sustainability expectations influence environmental responsibility

The UK aviation sector aims for net-zero emissions by 2050, driven primarily by Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) mandates, operational efficiencies, and future zero-emission aircraft technologies. However, rising passenger demands threaten to offset these green milestones. BA's sustainable expectations shape its environmental responsibility and internal culture, integrating eco-friendliness into core corporate strategy, employees' training and operational values under the "BA Better World" programme (British Airways, 2025a). BA's programme focused on achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. They are targeting 10% of total fuel from SAF by 2030 and scale up towards 50% to 70% by 2050 (Segal, 2025). They also invest in newer, more fuel-efficient aircraft and cut "single-use plastic and waste" on the ground.

5. Assessing whether culture acts as a barrier or an enabler to effective organisational functioning

Culture acts as a barrier to effective organisational functioning

Organisational culture acts as a significant barrier to effective functioning by creating rigidity, blocking innovation, and necessary change. Shared beliefs deeply institutionalised and turn into liabilities that prevent adaptation to a new environment.

Individual change resistance

Human nature involves being sensitive to certain kinds of perceived trends in the workplace. Individual change resistance leads to loss of control and eagerness in the workplace, developing a toxic environment. For example, BA has faced criticism for a toxic work environment rooted in hierarchical management, strict project-driven metrics and severe labour disputes in the workplace. Conflict with staff intensified during a major restructuring process, creating issues for frontline workers. On the other hand, El Masry and Chron  r, (2026) highlighted that changes to everyday work habits and routines have exacerbated issues in managing organisational functioning processes. BA training to cut operational costs while forming staff to deliver warm, high-end consumer services causes frustration in the workplace.

Lack of communication

Lack of communication in the workplace has raised delays in achieving organisational goals. Steller and Möllering (2026) highlighted that lack of communication hinders clarity and issues in achieving organisational goals, which created a negative impact on the firm's business performance. For example, BA has faced documented workplace communication issues, highlighted by policy implementation, frontline disconnect and operational information breakdown, which affect employees' performance.

Culture acts as an enabler to effective organisational functioning

Organisational culture acts as a vital enabler of effective functioning by driving alignment, guiding daily behaviours and boosting overall performance. It has helped to shape how teams collaborate, make decisions, and respond to change in the workplace.

Collaboration and trust

Organisational culture acts as a fundamental enabler for collaboration by establishing shared values, psychological safety, and trust. Workplace culture influences open communication, which encourages transparent dialogues and active listening across employees. As depicted by Pretty, (2026), open communication and psychological safety allow team members to share ideas freely and solve complex problems. BA shapes workplace collaboration through core values of being caring, open-minded and excellent, shifting from rigid hierarchies to modern digital teamwork for employee recognition.

Employees' engagement

Company culture directly shapes employees' engagement by establishing shared values, trust, and communication norms. Fahrudin and Suhana (2026) highlighted that positive workplace culture boosts belonging and performance in the workplace. BA uses culture and digital tools to raise employees' engagement, yielding a 60-point increase in staff's Net Promoter Score (eNPS) and a 30% rise in colleagues' engagement over five years (Unily, 2025). However, the transition remains between corporate culture goals and cost-cutting practices.

Justification from the above discussion

Culture acts as an enabler as the culture focuses on collaboration, trust, and enhances employees' engagement in the workplace. Communication increases flexibility among employees in the workplace culture and supports the firm's operations. The organisational culture is mainly an enabler as it supports safety, teamwork, and excellent customer service. The workplace culture also increases employees' engagement and develops a positive workplace culture at BA.

6. Impact of organisational culture on organisational performance

Employee commitments and operational efficiency

Workplace culture shapes employees' dedication and daily productivity by defining shared values, communication, and support systems. Fahrudin and Suhana (2026) highlighted that a positive culture strengthens employees' commitment and high operational efficiency. BA's workplace culture drives employee commitment and operational efficiency through core values, team empowerment, and targeted engagement initiatives. BA prioritises core pillars including excellence, caring and open-mindedness, which connect staff personally to the brand promises. The firm has collaborated with platforms such as Workhuman to enable real-time peer recognition, which directly boosts engagement scores and staff retention. The firm emphasises that moving from massive bureaucratic groups to smaller, focused operational teams gives staff direct ownership to improve organisational performance. BA's workplace culture emphasises process optimisation, such as structured programmes that target waste reduction, minimise equipment duplication and reduce passenger gate delays to improve overall punctuality for business operations.

Customer satisfaction and brand reputation

BA's workplace culture directly improves its service delivery, creating a clear chain reaction where employees' morale shapes customer experiences and overall brand standing. The firm engaged cabin crew and ground staff to translate core values "caring" and "excellence" into warm, personalised passenger interactions. The firm emphasises cohesive teamwork and standard training, which provides standard service quality to consumers. BA motivates and provides digital employee training to improve skills and increase consumer engagement. BA leverages a workplace culture focused on service and employee care to strengthen customer trust, brand loyalty, and improve its public image. The key positive influences include enhancing service quality through training initiatives such as "putting people first" alignment to staff behaviour. They also followed core ethos such as "To Fly, To Survey" and humanising the corporate identity by highlighting real employees' stories.

Recommendations

Investing in digital technology and strengthening leadership

BA can bridge operational communication gaps by investing in modern digital technology, migrating IT to the cloud, and adopting transformational leadership to manage its business operations. The firm needs to move IT systems to cloud platforms to streamline internal data flow and reduce system outages. The firm has to expand live chat features for instant passenger updates during disruption. They have to equip cabin crew and ground staff with dedicated mobile applications and Wi-Fi tools to synchronise updates across flights. For example, Virgin Atlantic launched an AI apprenticeship for staff, which improves employees' skills and contributes to standard service quality (Salmon, 2025). The firm can utilise AI and machine learning tools to predict delays and transmit automated alerts to operating teams for business performance. The firm can focus on the “clearly” principle of “Goal-setting theory” to upgrade AI and machine learning to consumers' satisfaction.

Improve communication in all departments and continue promoting diversity and inclusion

BA needs to improve cross-departmental communication to resolve operational friction, enhance employee alignment, and elevate the passenger experience. The firm can key focus on unified digital platforms, transparent crisis updates and frontline feedback loops. The firm should fix a fragmented system, which allows teams to manage operations and share data seamlessly. For example, TUI Airways facilitated cross-functional collaboration and upskilling through specialised programmes, leadership seminars and operational workshops in the UK facilities (TUI, 2026). The firm should focus on cross-functional workshops to bridge gaps between corporate planners and operational workers. The firm can incorporate the “reciprocity” principle of “Social Exchange Theory” to reduce toxic workplace culture and develop mutual respect for employees during cross-functional workshops. BA employees should provide clear updates from management to support passengers effectively during delays. The management of BA should focus on gender and leadership goals and support networks to expand its business operations.

7. Conclusion

The report has focused on evaluating the organisational culture of BA in terms of business operations. The findings of the report have shown that BA followed “role culture and task culture” to manage its business operations. The firm has applied Goal-setting theory and social exchange theory for its operations. The report findings highlighted that organisational culture has influenced the firm’s workplace conditions and advantages to develop behavioural relationships among teammates. The findings of the report have highlighted that organisational culture influences investment in technology and digital transformation, which improves service standardisation. The firm has required developing cross-functional workshops in order to improve employees’ skills and abilities to provide seamless consumer experiences in the market.

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