



**WORKPLACE CULTURE AND ITS IMPACT ON ORGANISATIONAL
EFFICIENCY**

BMSK5005



Student Name: Vadym Kozlov
Student Number: 1703901
Module Tutor: Dr Isaiah Oino

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Introduction

According to Heathfield (2018) the culture of any organisation is different, but always consists of values, beliefs, underlying assumptions, behaviours and attitudes and it must be shared by the group of people. Basically, culture forms a certain type of behaviour which makes possible for people with different backgrounds to do together certain tasks at the working place. That is why the culture is so important.

In this assignment the author will try to understand, assess and analyse the workplace culture within the organisation to be able to improve its functional ability if such opportunity will come along in the future. To make this investigation more realistic the author has chosen the company he worked for as a private hire driver for almost five years, Abbey Cars UK Group, to be precise, one of its branches in South – East London. In this assignment it will be simply called Abbey Cars.

A few words about the company itself. It is started as a family business in 1968. Today it is one of the most developed private hire operators in Greater London and South – East Anglia. Abbey Cars UK Group covering many areas including Heathrow Airport, London City Airport, Gatwick, Luton and Stansted airports too. Branches of this company can be found in Hammersmith, Chiswick, Feltham, Dulwich and Dagenham areas of London. The company employs around 5,000 drivers on various types of contracts, from full-time to casual. The services the company provides are ranging from minicab and chauffeur service to coaches, minibuses and overseas transportation.

Critical assessment of the culture of Abbey Cars

In this part of assignment, the author will be assessing and analysing the culture of Abbey Cars by using objective evidence such as company's code of conduct, current procedures and legislations. To show the structure of the workplace culture the author has arranged its most vital components in the diagram shown below:



Diagram based on source: (Heathfield, 2018)

Workplace values

Mind Tools (2018) states that it is essential that people working in the same group or the same workplace environment should have similar values. If someone within the group has different values, then the whole team work could be affected and possibly jeopardised. Being accountable, focused on details, honest, reliable, tolerant and respecting company policy and rules – all these values are forming the company's culture, making it unique and identifiable. Unfortunately, in the case of Abbey Cars branch where author was employed these values were not followed and observed fully by all the employees. Dishonesty, unreliability, not being able to be focused on the job tasks were the common events at his working place. Some of the drivers just did not want to do anything to help their colleagues. All that was not helping to keep the workplace culture at high level.

Workplace beliefs

Bennett (2009) says: "Beliefs are the core of who we are, what we do, and the success that we acquire". In other words it is the way the employees feel about how they been treated by their company. Understanding and analysing workplace beliefs helps to understand the whole company culture, whether it is successful or needs improvement.

To find out about workplace beliefs within Abbey Cars the author used the questionnaire like the one which was previously used in research by Deloitte (2012). He asked 25 drivers (85% of the branch workforce) about their beliefs at the workplace and the table below is showing the results of the survey:

Question	Yes, agree	No, disagree
"My company has unique culture"	10(40%)	15(60%)
"My boss speaks to me about company's culture"	8(32%)	17(68%)
"I am happy at work"	15(60%)	10(40%)
"I feel valued by the company"	14(56%)	11(45%)
"I have respect for the company's values"	15(60%)	10(40%)

Table based on source: (Author's survey)

It is obvious to the author that the company management must do some hard work to change their workers beliefs into more positive side by promoting better company

values. Formal communications between management and drivers need to be improved. In author's opinion one of the management theories would have to be implemented to change company's culture and behaviour. Business.com (2017) states there are six most popular theories being used now. They can be presented in the diagram shown below:

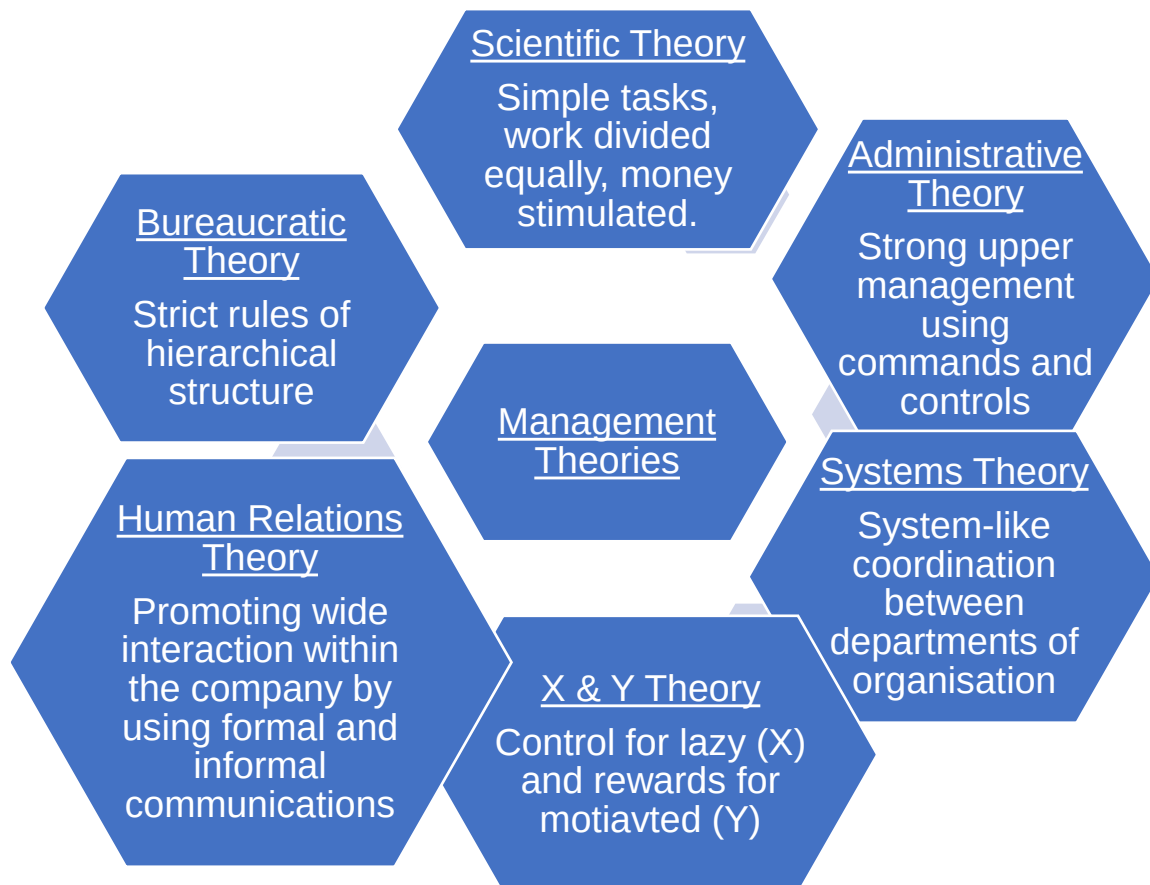


Diagram based on source: (Business.com, 2017)

After analysing all those theories author made conclusion that the most appropriate theory to use in case of Abbey Cars would be Human Relations Theory. According to Mulder (2017) it was first established by Elton Mayo during his Hawthorne experiment in 1924. Elton Mayo stated the great importance of formal communications between workers and management. Partnership within informal groups inside organisation is also one of the important parts of the Elton Mayo's theory.

Underlying assumptions

Rankin (2017) states that they do exist within any organisation, they are normally "known", but not written or discussed openly. They consist of beliefs, thoughts and feelings, so there is a link between beliefs and assumptions. Changing beliefs will eventually change the assumptions and vice versa. Sometimes it can cause organisational problems, signalling the need of change within the company's

management. In the case of Abbey Cars, the author can see clearly the conflict between assumptions and beliefs, the rise of negative beliefs caused by undermining the core values of the company makes the way to wrong assumptions, as a result corrupting the whole culture of Abbey Cars organisation.

Workplace attitudes

Very important to the culture of organisation. Workers with positive attitude making company to grow, being profitable and prosperous. Negative attitude causes the company to make loss, get bad reputation and go out of business in some cases. Belcher (2018) confirms, there are five main attitudes which all the businesses should seek in their workers to be efficient, productive and profitable. The author composed them in the diagram, showing the average percentage of Abbey Cars employees are possessing such attitudes, based on the survey conducted between 25 members of staff (80% of the workforce) taking part.

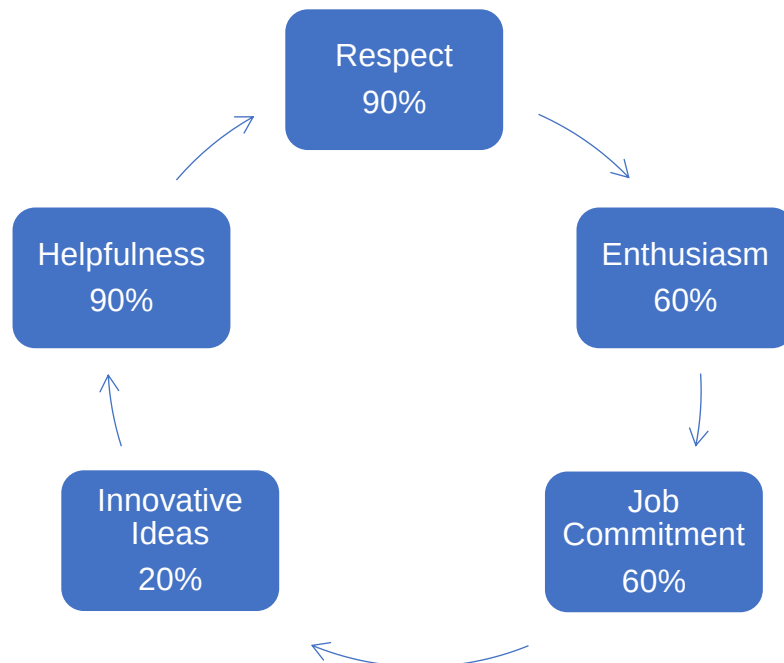


Diagram based on source: (Author's research)

From this diagram we can see that most of the drivers are helpful and respectful to each other and to the customers. 10% of the participants refused to be helpful to other drivers on personal reasons, the customer side was not affected at all. Enthusiasm and job commitment on author's opinion connected to each other. Basically that concerns some working hours and certain jobs and certain directions that drivers just did not want to do, again on personal or religious grounds. And finally, been innovative: just a few people mentioned the need to upgrade of the existing booking system, which is very slow and sometimes it "freezes" for some time. That can lead to losing the booking data and inability to take a new one. Other drivers mentioned the upgrading of their existing PDAs.

Workplace behaviour

Is determined and clarified in the company code of conduct. Thompson (2017) states that a code of conduct is a complex reflection of the core values of organisation including set of the guidelines regarding acceptable and unacceptable forms of behaviour for employees of the organisation or company. Abbey Cars in its code of conduct clearly states acceptable and unacceptable forms of workplace behaviour. Here some of the examples of **acceptable behaviour** within Abbey Cars employees:

- Be cooperative and helpful towards your colleagues and customers;
- Perform your work duties in appropriate, professional and fair way;
- Comply with company's dress code: always dress smartly and be well groomed without excessive jewellery and tattoos in the view;
- Always maintain your vehicle to be roadworthy, clean and fuelled, in the certain weather conditions make sure you have hand towels, drinking water and umbrella in the car;
- Always wear your company ID and PCO Licence badge.

The author specifically highlighted those five examples to analyse Abbey Cars employee's compliance towards them. Now some examples of **unacceptable behaviour** taken from the company code of conduct:

- Harassment, discrimination and bullying;
- Emotional or physical violence or abuse;
- Occupational violence;
- Aggressive behaviour;
- Sabotaging and disrupting company's production processes or activity.

In author's opinion vast majority of the Abbey Cars employees were complying with the code of conduct regarding workplace behaviour. The usual breaches of the code were committed by not complying with the dress code, not being helpful enough towards the colleagues, being late for the shift, lots of issues with dirty or smelly cars. Another breach was not wearing the PCO Licence badge especially inside the airport, causing the fines being issued later.

Evaluation of Abbey Cars context using environmental and organisational analysis techniques

According to Stojanovic (2018) the context of organisation is the requirement of the ISO 9001 - the International Standard for Quality Management Systems or QMS for short. Recently it was updated in 2015 and now is referred to as ISO 9001:2015. This requirement states that any organisation must take into consideration external and internal factors influencing the planning of QMS within this organisation. The organisation or the company must evaluate itself and this valuation must include the definition of the influence of external and internal elements on company's culture, objectives, goals, products, also risks and opportunities being involved. In this part of assignment, the author will be analysing and evaluating the context of Abbey Cars

using environmental and organisational analysis techniques. First, the author will analyse the external factors using the PESTLE technique in the table shown below:

Political Factors	Economic Factors	Social Factors
Political discussions about minimum wage laws in the taxi industry. Compliance with government policies. Compliance with the relevant laws and policies. Increase or decrease of the tax. Trade control. Bureaucracy.	Sharing of physical or intellectual resources. Growing competition from other companies such as Uber or Addison Lee. New career opportunities. Growing economic potential.	Easy access to book via app or online. Customer choose the pick-up time and payment method through the app instead of communicating with controller. Rising prices due to high demand times and areas. Customer's choice.
Technological Factors	Legal Factors	Environmental Factors
Widespread popularity due to the use of social media. Easy to book and pay for the ride. New and improved booking system. Constant need of upgrading driver's PDAs, can be costly.	Need to comply with all the relevant laws and regulations. Possible law suits from the customers unsatisfied with customer service level provided.	Increasing traffic congestion. Increasing use of fuel. Environmental impact: air pollution, costs of disposing not - roadworthy cars.

Table based on source: (Frue, 2018)

In conclusion, Abbey Cars is playing a big role in shared economy. The company is well known and long – term established operator in UK's taxi industry. To keep its popularity growing Abbey Cars must stay competitive against other players on the market. Cheaper fares, easy to use apps and regularly updated website, more customer faced level of service provided by the drivers will keep the company

profitable and prosperous. To investigate how competitive the company Abbey Cars can be on the taxi market, the author also performed SWOT analysis to see what strengths, weakness, opportunities and treats are referring to Abbey Cars. It is presented in the table shown below:

Strengths	Weakness
✓ Well - known brand. ✓ High level of service. ✓ Big choice of vehicles. ✓ Lower prices compare to other taxi operators. ✓ High valuation of the company. ✓ Attractive to investors.	✓ Big pressure from competitors. ✓ Relationship between management and drivers lacks connection. ✓ Very high cost operating of the vehicles, at the same time drivers not paid a great deal of money.
Opportunities	Threats
✓ Lowering prices and reducing waiting time will attract customers. ✓ Operating in suburban areas will fill the gap in the market not covered by other operators. ✓ Using cheaper electric cars will reduce operating cost and increase drivers' profits. ✓ Additional services like food delivery, school and hospital transportation can be arranged to increase revenue.	✓ Some drivers are not happy with low wages, their opinion on the company are discouraging other drivers from joining in. ✓ Family connections within the company causing fraud and corruption which damages the brand. ✓ Problems with local authorities, unpaid parking fines, disputes over the work in rural areas. ✓ Increasing pressure from competitors like Uber, Addison Lee.

Table based on source: (PESTLEanalysis contributor, 2018)

In overall, customers love the company. They like the level of service they are being offered. They are getting good value for their money. New booking app is time and money saving. Relations with local authorities and changes in the government policies regarding taxi industry can damage the company's image. Keeping low prices will not attract new drivers and will make existing drivers feel underpaid and miserable.

Brief analysis of formal and informal communications within Abbey Cars

Surbhi (2015) states that **formal communication** within the company is coming through pre – established and well - formed set of channels. In case of Abbey Cars, it can be described in the diagram shown below:

Information

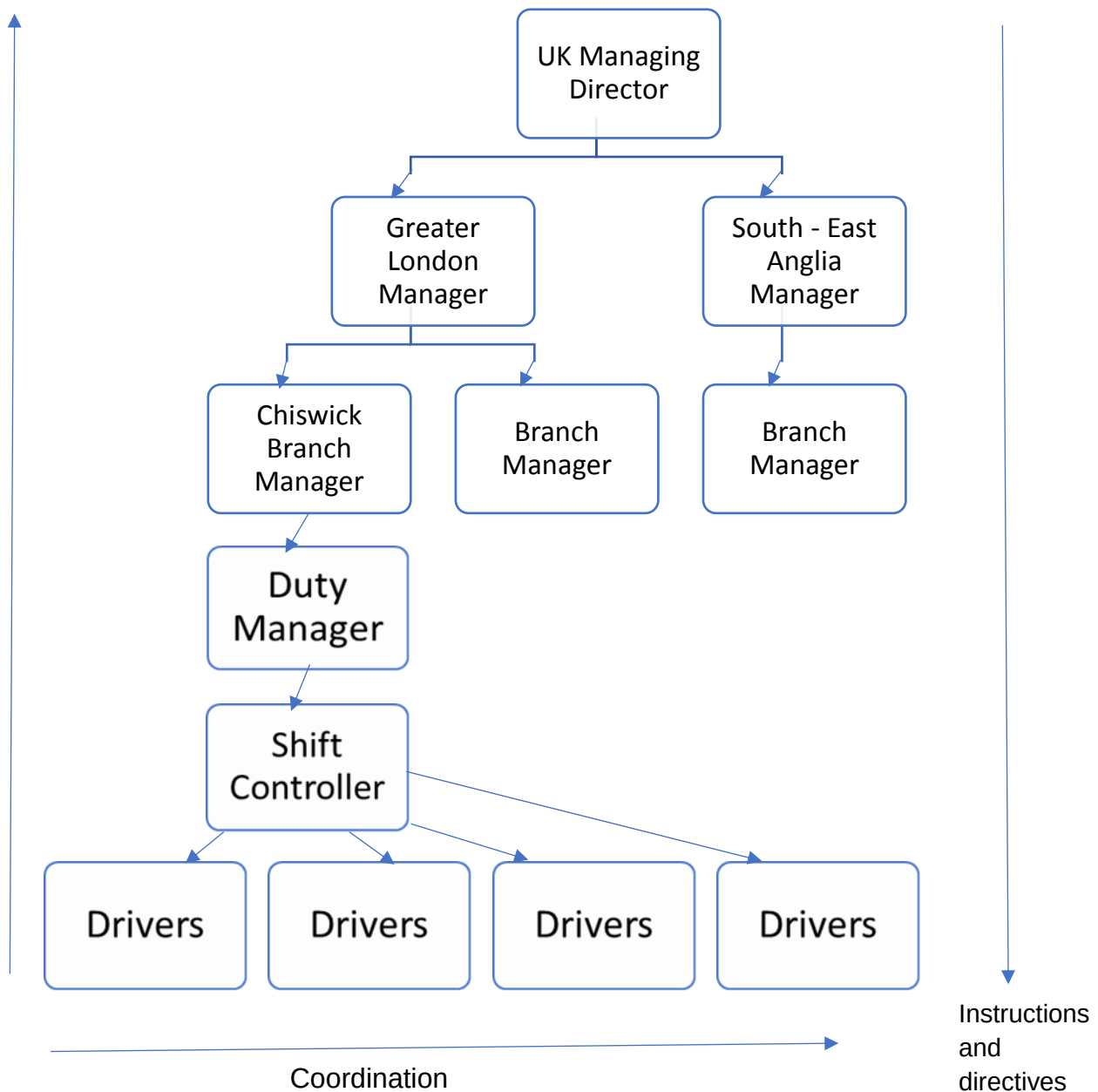


Diagram based on source: (Author's research)

To describe the difference between formal and **informal communication** within Abbey Cars the author completed comparison table shown below:

Reason for comparison	Formal communication	Informal communication
Definition	The type of verbal or non-verbal communication where the transmission is done through approved pre – established channels.	Transmission is done not through channels, distributed in all directions.
Other definitions	Official communication.	Grapevine communication.
Reliability	Very reliable.	Less reliable, cannot be verified easily.
Speed	Slow to medium.	Fast.
Transmitted data security	Protection is guaranteed.	Not guaranteed, can be easily corrupted.

Table based on source: (Surbhi, 2015)

The author in his time has experienced some of informal communications within Abbey Cars and not all of them were following the guidelines of the formal ones. The reason can be seen in huge cultural and life experience differences in beliefs within the managers of Abbey Cars. On one side they are trying to follow official guidelines and directives approved by the organisation, on the other side the informal groups within the company are implementing those guidelines and directives differently. Sometimes it causes huge rows between informal groups of drivers when they see that someone been treated differently than the others. Also, the lack and weakness of communications between different informal groups of drivers is the cause of failing formal relationships between management and driving staff. All that is corrupting and damaging the whole culture of the company. The use of above mentioned Human Relations Theory by Elton Mayo would change the things for the better. If author was the top manager of Abbey Cars he would implement one of the Elton Mayo's studies, called Mass Interviewing Programme (1928 – 1931). That study was started to explore the feelings of employees within their informal groups. In case of Abbey Cars these groups playing important role in forming company's culture and behaviour. The author would ask employees during the interviews to express their concerns, likes and dislikes of the company's policies, working conditions, management, relations between management and workers. Just the fact of those interviews, without any immediate reforms applied, would make workers attitude to change. They would feel more noticed and valued by the management. They would feel that their working conditions changed even though no changes took place. At the same time the real

problems within the company could be uncovered as the results of the interviews and dealt with later.

Critical reviewing of the cultural and ethical behaviour present in Abbey Cars

In this part of assignment, the author will be analysing and assessing the cultural and ethical behaviour environment within Abbey Cars. **Cultural behaviour** of the company is formed by the company culture, which as the author already stated before in this assignment consists of values, beliefs and attitudes shared by the group of people within the organisation. The author has reviewed the Top Five of the Abbey Cars cultural guidelines followed by the cultural behaviour in accordance to each guideline. The results of this review are presented in the table shown below:

Cultural Guidelines	Cultural Behaviour
1. We think global, we live local.	Despite the huge scale of the nationwide operations, the company always pays attention to every city, village or rural area to give their residents the best level of customer service.
2. We are 110% customer focused.	110 is not a misprint. The company is prepared for short – term sacrifices to go over the top to earn customers trust and loyalty. Helping customers with their problems, no matter how small or big they are being is what the company does.
3. We behave like owners.	The employees are encouraged by the management to be active in identifying and solving problems on the spot. It makes them feel like they own the company and can change company's future.
4. We like differences.	Company welcomes people from different background and cultures. Company also encourages different views, thoughts and opinions to be heard.
5. We believe in our success.	The company learns on its own mistakes, changes policies, goals and objectives to be the best of the best.

Table based on source: (Author's research)

To find out how cultural behaviour of Abbey Cars is being implemented in real life and how people feel about it, the author conducted two separate face to face surveys with Abbey Cars customers and its drivers. The similar technique was used by Geert Hofstede when he concluded a large survey within IBM company and its overseas branches in 1970. Mulder (2017) calls it organisational cultural analysis tool. First survey was conducted within 40 of the Abbey Cars customers randomly selected in different areas of Greater London and surrounding areas. The author asked Abbey Cars drivers to give already printed questionnaire to the customers after completing the journey and later they texted to the author their responses. The result of survey is shown in the table below:

Question	Yes, agree	No, disagree
1. I saw a few vehicles with Abbey Cars logo on them in my area and I used their service at least once.	20(50%)	20(50%)
2. When I used Abbey Cars service I felt very special, the driver listened to my wishes and demands very carefully and tried to fulfil them to his (her) best ability.	35(87.5%)	5(12.5%)
3. If we happened to have problem on the way to destination, driver always tried his (her) best to sort it on the spot rather than calling control room.	30(75%)	10(25%)
4. The driver did not ask me where I was from, the question other taxi companies asking almost every time. He treated me regardless of my place of birth and cultural background.	38(95%)	2(5%)
5. I had a feeling that the driver of Abbey Cars was happy to work for this company, that's how he (she) looked to me.	25(62.5%)	15(37.5%)

Table based on source: (Author's research)

As we can see from the results of the survey between passengers, most of the customers are happy with the cultural behaviour of the company, especially when it comes to level of service, problem solving and the respect to the people from different

backgrounds. There are still some areas of concern, though, including the coverage of suburban areas and the drivers' happiness at workplace.

That is why the author conducted another face to face survey within drivers to find out how they feel about cultural behaviour of Abbey Cars in general. 20 drivers of one of the branches (80% of the workforce) were asked five questions. The table below is showing the feedback:

Question	Yes, agree	No, disagree
1. I like the challenge of exploring new areas of work. I never refuse to cover suburban areas when asked by the manager.	10(50%)	10(50%)
2. I always try to give customer the highest level of service and to make them feel special. Customer's ratings are very important to me.	20(100%)	0(0%)
3. If I happened to have problem on the route and I can sort it myself, I will always do that. That does not include big breakdowns or accidents.	15(75%)	5(25%)
4. I always try to treat customers and work colleagues regardless of their sex, religion or nationality.	17(85%)	3(15%)
5. I am happy to work for Abbey Cars and will recommend it to anyone looking for work as a taxi driver.	12(60%)	8(40%)

Table based on source: (Author's research)

In this case questions 2, 3 and 4 were like the questions 2, 3 and 4 in previous survey and they received more positive response again. That means these guidelines set by Abbey Cars are being followed complied with. The two problems are clearly appealing to attention here: drivers' will to take new challenges and overall happiness at working place. The solution can be found in better interaction between managers and drivers, further training where applicable, financial motivation, like prizes for best driver of the month, reducing commission rates and giving more flexibility in choosing working hours.

According to Bomi International (2018) every company and organisation must have established **ethical behaviour** clearly identifying right from wrong and good from bad. Bomi International (2018) states that there are six main principles which should be

forming the ethical behaviour and practice of the company or organisation. They are presented in the diagram shown below:

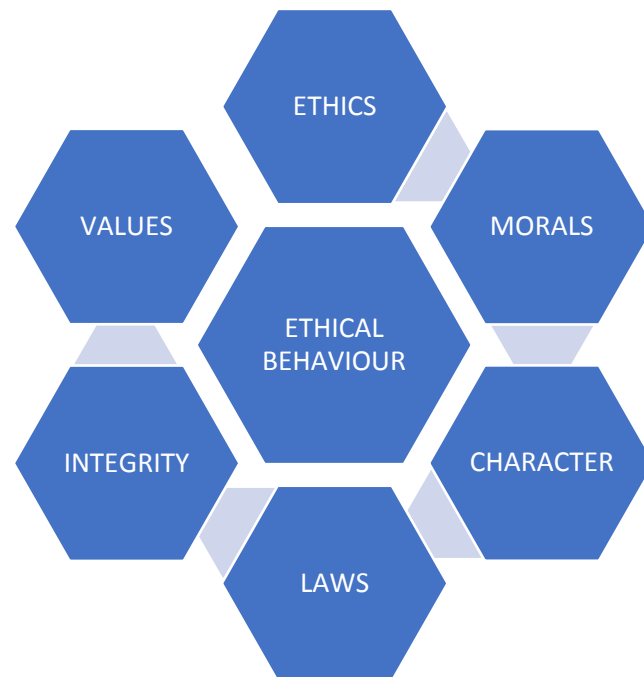


Diagram based on source: (Bomi International, 2018)

1. **Ethics** – list of rules describing acceptable code of conduct within the society.
2. **Values** – combination of acts, customs and institutions regarded by the group of people as their favourite.
3. **Morals** – rules on which the code of conduct of society is based. It clearly defines what is good, right and acceptable.
4. **Integrity** – all about being honest, trustworthy and accountable for the actions.
5. **Character** – everyone has his or her unique character, built on his or her beliefs, values and attitudes. Company's character is very similar structured, every day the company built its own character by performing certain actions towards its wellbeing and prosperity.
6. **Laws** – set of rules and regulations is necessary to segregate right and acceptable behaviour from wrong and unacceptable. For example, killing someone with intent to steal and killing someone as the result of acting in self-defence. In both cases it is prohibited and illegal. However, the ethical side of both violations is very different and can be discussed further.

To evaluate the ethical behaviour of Abbey Cars the author completed the survey within company' employees. The structure of survey is based on the similar research conducted by Sroka and Lorinczy (2015). 30 people in two different branches of Abbey Cars were asked the set of 7 questions. The results are presented in the table shown below:

Questions	Yes, agree	No, disagree	Not sure
1. Does Abbey Cars have clearly stated ethical values and norms?	15(50%)	10(33%)	5(17%)
2. Does Abbey Cars have clearly formed procedures regarding unethical behaviour?	15(50%)	8(27%)	7(23%)
3. I have experienced ethical dilemmas at work.	30(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
4. I myself behaved unethically at work.	10(33%)	20(67%)	0(0%)
5. My supervisors always state the importance of ethical behaviour.	15(50%)	10(33%)	5(17%)
6. Customers always expecting ethical behaviour from my company.	28(93%)	0(0%)	2(7%)
7. My company helps local community in its activities.	10(33%)	15(50%)	5(17%)

Table based on source: (Author's research)

In author's opinion the survey can be divided into three groups according to the percentage of positive and negative answers:

“Positive group” – questions 3 and 6, that is where most of the drivers were concerned about ethical problems at work (question 3) and about customer focused behaviour (question 6). Ethical behaviour of the drivers is the part of company's ethical behaviour and sometimes clashes between different cultures and backgrounds are affecting ethical behaviour towards the customers plus customers themselves sometimes creating ethical problems and dilemmas.

“Middle group” – questions 1, 2 and 5. These questions are connected to each other; therefore, the response rate is similar. In author's opinion the reason for results of questions 1 and 2 is covered in the question 5: lack of communications between supervisors (and managers of course) and drivers, not getting enough information about company's ethics and culture through formal communications channels, inability of organising face to face meetings to promote company's values, beliefs and attitude.

“Negative group” – questions 4 and 7. Not visibly connected to each other, however they are showing the honesty of the drivers regarding their unethical behaviour and company's involvement in local activity. The absence of the unsure results in question 4 clearly shows that all the drivers are aware of what ethical and unethical behaviour is. So, some of the formal communications within the company are getting through and making difference. And of course, company's interaction with local community and

residents could be increased by taking part in various events, especially when it comes to different cultural and religious celebrations.

Conclusion

In author's opinion Abbey Cars makes an impression of solid, well – established organisation with strong and positive culture and behaviour. It has well – developed structure of formal communications within the organisation. The company's workforce is aware of company's values, beliefs, behaviours and attitudes. Most of the employees are complying with company's rules, procedures and guidelines.

However, during author's employment with Abbey Cars, the author has seen a lot of problems within the organisation. The behaviour of some employees towards their colleagues including author was unacceptable. The reason being was the difference in cultures and social backgrounds. Within the company were created informal groups of employees formed by the belonging to certain nationality or religion. The relations between those groups were far from friendly. Being one of the few representatives of Eastern Europe within the branch workforce has made the author feeling like an outcast. The other three drivers from Europe did not unite in the group, everybody kept themselves to themselves. In opposition two big informal groups were created by the drivers belonging to certain countries. They were constantly competing between themselves to get better well-paid jobs. Manager's nationality was playing the crucial role in this competition. The author's destiny was long hours sitting in the car, waiting for £7 - £10 jobs around the corner and then again long waiting time, because all the good jobs were already distributed. The scale of corruption was massive. Author tried to raise some concerns with the managers, they listened, made notes and that was it. Dishonesty, unreliability was the common occurrence between drivers and management. Family ties and connections were more important things to follow. All that, mentioned above plus low wages caused author to leave the job in this branch. He moved to another branch, where he was treated much better and had more opportunities to work and make some money. The culture within that branch was very different to the previous one, no groups and no conflicts. Management treated everyone equally and decently. Soon the author was promoted to be the controller. In overall, the employment with Abbey Cars was great life experience.

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Web links

<https://www.tsd.ac.uk/en/lrc/onlineresources/e-books/>

<https://abbeycarsuk.co.uk/>