

Two different forms of culture

Acas distinguishes two different organisation cultures and different ways of doing things:

- control culture with the emphasis on rules and procedures, control and compliance with precedent providing guidelines; and
- quality of working life culture with the emphasis on core values, with mission statements providing guidance and commitment via shared goals, values and traditions.²⁰

Kershaw contrasts rules-based or values-based culture.

In rules-based cultures, people follow the rules and procedures assuming they are in place for good reasons, as a result of the regulatory nature of the work they undertake, or because of a particular management style. In value-driven organisations, there is an expected code of conduct. People should understand the values of the organisation and know how to behave and perform. Diverse organisations need a mix of 'command and control' and 'culture and values' to be successful.²¹

Importance of culture

Applications of organisational behaviour and effective management of people are dependent not only upon the nature of the industry or business, but also upon the characteristic features of the individual organisation – and its culture. The pervasive nature of culture in terms of 'how things are done around here' and common values, beliefs and attitudes will therefore have a significant effect on organisational processes such as decision-making, design of structure, group behaviour, work organisation, motivation and job satisfaction, and management control. With increasing globalisation, work organisations are becoming even more complex and internationally based. There is greater emphasis on the understanding and management of a diverse group of people from different nationalities into a coherent culture.

Reigle refers to culture as an important factor in successful technology implementation, innovation, mergers, acquisitions, job satisfaction, organisational success and team effectiveness, and to the importance of determining whether organisations exhibit organic or mechanistic cultures.²²

A director of Glassdoor Europe, *Joe Wiggins*, suggests that apart from money and compensation, company culture is the most important influence on the decision of candidates to join an organisation, followed by company reputation/employer brand.²³

Culture and work ethic

Culture can influence people's attitudes and behaviour at work. *Bunting* draws attention to the link between work ethic (**discussed in Chapter 1**) and culture, and the extent to which people have a choice over how hard they work. Although some

people have no choice, for the vast majority of people there is a degree of choice but the choices are not made in isolation:

they are the product of the particular organisational culture of our workplaces, which promote concepts of success, of team spirit so that we don't let colleagues down, and a powerful work ethic. We are also influenced by a culture that reinforces that work ethic and its cycle of continual achievement and consumption as measures of self-worth.

Bunting maintains it is through work that we seek to satisfy our craving for a sense of control, mastery and security and clever organisations exploit this cultural context by designing corporate cultures that meet the emotional needs of their employees.²⁴

The competitive environment and concerns about job security have contributed to a prevailing work culture of 'presenteeism'. In many organisations working long hours is seen as a necessary feature of acceptable behaviour and career progression. Presenteeism does not necessarily imply physical presence at your place of work but ready availability at most hours, including weekends and evenings, by email and mobile.

National cultural environment (**discussed in Chapter 1**) can have a noticeable effect on presenteeism. As the author experienced for himself in Australia work-related activities are often undertaken comfortably away from the workplace, in local coffee houses for example, without concern about not being seen by management. This is in contrast to the typical work ethic throughout much of the USA where again the author experienced the almost obsessive concern for always being seen about the place.



How has YOUR work ethic been influenced by the cultural environment of your university? To what extent is there an expectation of presenteeism for staff and for students?

Culture and organisational performance

Culture is clearly an important ingredient of effective organisational performance. *Stanford* suggests that although people have difficulty in explaining why, intuitively they know that 'yes, of course' culture matters. It is an intangible asset that is both distinctive to that organisation and adds value to it (or diminishes value). Ten typical characteristics that form the typical organisation culture are:

- a story or stories
- a purpose
- set of values
- an attitude to people
- a global mindset
- a relationship network
- a digital presence
- a reputation