

There Are Three Elements Of Managing Organizational Culture. Two Are Taking Advantage Of The Existing

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Organizational culture is the invisible force that shapes how employees behave, interact, and work towards common objectives within a company. It influences everything from employee morale to customer satisfaction, and ultimately, the overall success of the organization. Managing this culture effectively is crucial for sustainable growth and competitive advantage. Interestingly, managing organizational culture involves three fundamental elements, with two of them focusing on leveraging what already exists within the organization. Understanding these elements can empower leaders to foster a positive, adaptive, and resilient culture.

In this article, we explore these three elements, emphasize the importance of taking advantage of existing cultural aspects, and provide practical strategies to manage organizational culture effectively.

The Three Elements of Managing Organizational Culture

Managing organizational culture can be viewed through three interconnected elements:

1. Understanding and Diagnosing the Existing Culture
2. Leveraging and Reinforcing Existing Cultural Elements
3. Shaping and Evolving the Culture for Future Success

While all three are vital, the first two focus on taking advantage of the existing culture—recognizing and utilizing what is already in place—while the third emphasizes intentional change.

1. Understanding and Diagnosing the Existing Culture

Before any management strategy can be implemented, leaders need to gain a deep understanding of the current organizational culture. This involves:

- Assessing Cultural Values and Norms: What behaviors, beliefs, and values are prevalent among employees?
- Identifying Subcultures: Are there distinct groups within the organization with their own norms?
- Understanding Cultural Artifacts: Symbols, language, rituals, and stories that reflect the organization's culture.
- Gathering Employee Perceptions: Conducting surveys, interviews, and focus groups to understand how employees perceive their workplace environment.

Why is this important?

Knowing what already exists enables leaders to build upon strengths and

address potential misalignments. Recognizing the positive elements allows organizations to take advantage of existing cultural assets rather than trying to reinvent the wheel.

2. Leveraging and Reinforcing Existing Cultural Elements

Once the current culture is understood, the next step is to intentionally leverage and reinforce the elements that support organizational goals. This involves:

- Identifying Cultural Strengths: Recognize what behaviors, traditions, or norms support productivity, innovation, and collaboration.
- Aligning Leadership Behaviors: Leaders should model the cultural values they wish to see reinforced.
- Utilizing Cultural Symbols and Rituals: Use existing rituals, ceremonies, or symbols to promote desired behaviors.
- Recognizing and Rewarding Positive Behaviors: Implement recognition programs that highlight behaviors aligned with the desired culture.
- Communicating Success Stories: Share stories that exemplify the cultural values in action to reinforce organizational identity.

Benefits of leveraging existing culture:

- Facilitates smoother change processes.
- Builds employee buy-in by respecting established norms.
- Enhances engagement by recognizing what's working well.

3. Shaping and Evolving the Culture for Future Success

While taking advantage of existing elements is crucial, effective cultural management also involves shaping and evolving the culture to meet future challenges. This aspect requires:

- Setting a Clear Cultural Vision: Define the desired future state of the organization's culture.
- Implementing Change Initiatives: Introduce new values, behaviors, or practices aligned with strategic goals.
- Aligning Systems and Processes: Ensure HR policies, performance management, and organizational structures support cultural evolution.
- Continuous Monitoring and Feedback: Regularly assess cultural changes and adjust strategies accordingly.

This element is about proactive development—not just maintaining what exists but intentionally guiding culture growth to support innovation, diversity, agility, and resilience.

Two Elements Focused on Taking Advantage of the

Existing Culture

The first two elements—understanding and diagnosing the existing culture, and leveraging it—are about recognizing the foundation already laid within the organization. These are often the most practical and immediate strategies managers can utilize to strengthen the organization.

Why Focus on Existing Culture?

- **Cost-Effective:** Building on what is already in place reduces the need for extensive upheaval.
- **Less Resistance:** Employees are more receptive to changes that align with their current values and norms.
- **Faster Implementation:** Reinforcing existing practices accelerates the adoption of new initiatives.
- **Authenticity:** Actions that honor existing culture tend to be more genuine and sustainable.

Strategies to Take Advantage of Existing Cultural Elements

- **Identify Core Values:** Determine what values are deeply embedded and align future initiatives with these values.
- **Celebrate Cultural Successes:** Recognize and promote stories of employees embodying the current culture positively.
- **Utilize Rituals and Symbols:** Reinforce organizational identity through traditions, ceremonies, or language that resonate with employees.
- **Engage Employees in Cultural Maintenance:** Involve staff in maintaining positive cultural elements, fostering ownership and pride.
- **Address Cultural Gaps:** Recognize areas where the current culture may hinder progress and find ways to adapt without eroding core strengths.

Balancing Preservation and Change

While leveraging existing cultural elements is advantageous, organizations must balance this with the need for growth and adaptation. Relying solely on the current culture can lead to stagnation or resistance to necessary change. Therefore, effective cultural management involves:

- Recognizing which elements of the culture are assets and should be preserved.
- Identifying aspects that need evolution to meet strategic objectives.
- Carefully planning interventions that respect and reinforce the positive parts of the existing culture while introducing new elements.

Practical Examples of Managing Organizational Culture

Example 1:

A tech startup with a culture of innovation and risk-taking can leverage this by encouraging employees to experiment and share ideas openly. Leadership can reinforce this by celebrating successful innovations and learning from failures.

Example 2:

A manufacturing company with a tradition of safety rituals can reinforce safety culture by maintaining and enhancing these rituals, while also integrating new safety protocols aligned with current best practices.

Example 3:

An organization facing rapid change can identify existing cultural strengths such as teamwork and adaptability, then build on these qualities to facilitate smoother transitions.

Conclusion

Managing organizational culture effectively involves a nuanced understanding of the existing cultural landscape and strategic leveraging of its elements. The first two elements—diagnosing the current culture and taking advantage of its strengths—are about recognizing and utilizing what already works within the organization. These approaches foster stability, engagement, and authenticity.

However, to remain competitive and responsive to change, organizations must also proactively shape and evolve their culture. By balancing preservation with innovation, leaders can cultivate a resilient, adaptive, and aligned organizational environment.

In summary, successful cultural management is not about creating a new culture from scratch but about intelligently harnessing current strengths and guiding cultural evolution in alignment with strategic goals. This approach ensures organizations remain authentic, motivated, and adaptable in an ever-changing business landscape.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the three key elements involved in managing organizational culture?

The three elements are understanding the current culture, shaping or changing it to align with organizational goals, and leveraging existing cultural strengths to reinforce desired behaviors.

How can organizations effectively take advantage of

their existing culture?

Organizations can identify and utilize the strengths and positive values already present within the culture to support strategic initiatives and foster employee engagement.

Why is it important to manage organizational culture proactively?

Proactive management helps ensure the culture supports organizational objectives, promotes consistency, and can adapt to external changes while maintaining core values.

What are some common challenges when managing organizational culture?

Challenges include resistance to change, misalignment between culture and strategic goals, and difficulties in accurately assessing and influencing the existing cultural elements.

How do the two elements that involve taking advantage of the existing culture complement the third element?

They provide a foundation of stability and strengths that can be built upon or modified through deliberate efforts, ensuring any cultural change is grounded in what already works well within the organization.

Additional Resources

There Are Three Elements Of Managing Organizational Culture. Two Are Taking Advantage Of The Existing

In the complex landscape of organizational development, understanding and managing culture has become increasingly vital. The phrase "There Are Three Elements Of Managing Organizational Culture. Two Are Taking Advantage Of The Existing" encapsulates a strategic insight: effective culture management often involves leveraging what is already in place while carefully shaping the remaining elements. This article delves deeply into the three fundamental elements of managing organizational culture, emphasizing how organizations can harness existing cultural facets to foster growth, resilience, and adaptability.

Understanding Organizational Culture: The Foundation

Organizational culture encompasses the shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that characterize an organization. It influences employee behavior, decision-making processes, and the overall organizational climate. Managing this intangible asset requires deliberate strategies that align culture with

organizational goals.

While many focus on creating new cultural elements or reshaping existing ones, an often-overlooked perspective underscores the importance of taking advantage of the existing elements—those cultural features already embedded within the organization. This approach minimizes resistance, accelerates change, and ensures authenticity in cultural transformation.

The Three Elements of Managing Organizational Culture

Research and practical insights identify three core elements essential to managing organizational culture effectively:

1. Leveraging Existing Cultural Elements
2. Shaping or Introducing New Cultural Elements
3. Aligning Organizational Structures and Systems with Culture

Of these, the first two are predominantly about taking advantage of existing elements, while the third involves deliberate alignment and modification.

1. Leveraging Existing Cultural Elements

This element involves recognizing, understanding, and utilizing the cultural features that already exist within the organization. It's the strategic utilization of strengths, norms, and practices that have become ingrained over time.

Why Focus on Existing Elements?

- **Authenticity and Acceptance:** Employees are more receptive to change when it builds upon familiar values and norms.
- **Speed and Efficiency:** Leveraging existing elements reduces the time and effort needed for cultural change.
- **Stability and Continuity:** Existing cultural elements serve as a foundation during turbulent times.

Practical Strategies

- **Cultural Audits:** Conduct surveys, interviews, and observations to map out core cultural features.
- **Identifying Cultural Strengths:** Recognize elements such as a strong customer focus, innovation spirit, or team collaboration.
- **Reinforcement:** Use existing communication channels, rituals, and symbols to reinforce desired behaviors.

Case Example

A tech startup with a long-standing emphasis on innovation can leverage this cultural element to introduce new product lines or expand into new markets,

knowing that the innovation mindset is already embedded and supported.

2. Shaping or Introducing New Cultural Elements

While leveraging existing elements is crucial, organizations also need to adapt and evolve their culture to meet new strategic challenges. This involves intentionally creating or modifying cultural features.

Why Introduce New Elements?

- **Aligning with Strategic Goals:** To support transformation initiatives like digitalization or globalization.
- **Addressing Cultural Gaps:** To close gaps that hinder performance or inclusivity.
- **Revitalization:** To refresh organizational identity and morale.

Strategies for Introducing New Cultural Elements

- **Leadership Role:** Leaders must embody and communicate the new cultural visions convincingly.
- **Storytelling and Symbols:** Use stories, rituals, and symbols to embed new cultural elements.
- **Recognition and Rewards:** Reinforce new behaviors through incentives.
- **Training and Development:** Offer programs to develop skills aligned with new cultural expectations.

Challenges and Considerations

- Resistance from employees accustomed to existing norms.
- The risk of superficial or inconsistent implementation.
- Ensuring that new elements are authentic and sustainable.

Case Example

A traditional manufacturing firm aiming to foster innovation may introduce new cultural elements like “embracing experimentation” through innovation labs, storytelling, and leadership endorsement, while acknowledging and integrating existing operational excellence practices.

3. Aligning Organizational Structures and Systems with Culture

The third element involves adjusting organizational structures, policies, and systems to support and sustain the desired cultural elements.

Why Is Alignment Important?

- Structures and systems are often the tangible manifestations of culture.
- Misalignments can undermine cultural initiatives and create confusion.

Practical Approaches

- Restructuring: Modify hierarchies or reporting lines to promote collaboration.
- Policies and Procedures: Update policies to reflect cultural priorities.
- Performance Management: Incorporate cultural values into evaluation criteria.
- Communication Systems: Use channels that reinforce cultural messages.

Example

If an organization aspires to foster a culture of transparency, it might implement open-book management, regular town halls, and feedback mechanisms aligned with this cultural goal.

Two Are Taking Advantage Of The Existing

The core insight of the initial statement emphasizes that two of the three elements focus on capitalizing on the existing cultural landscape. This strategic choice offers numerous benefits:

- Minimizes Resistance: Change built on existing elements faces less opposition.
- Increases Speed of Adoption: Leveraging familiar norms accelerates cultural shifts.
- Ensures Authenticity: Changes resonate more genuinely when they align with core values.

By recognizing and taking advantage of existing cultural elements, organizations can create a foundation for sustainable change.

Balancing Exploitation and Innovation in Cultural Management

While leveraging existing elements is advantageous, organizations must also be cautious not to become complacent. The dynamic environment requires a balance:

- Exploiting the Strengths: Use existing cultural elements as a springboard.
- Introducing Necessary Innovations: Carefully embed new elements to adapt and evolve.

Successful cultural management is thus a nuanced process that requires understanding when to capitalize on what already exists and when to introduce new elements.

Conclusion: Strategic Cultural Management as a Continuous Process

In summary, managing organizational culture involves a deliberate interplay between leveraging existing cultural elements and shaping new ones, supported by aligning organizational structures and systems. Recognizing that two of the three elements focus on taking advantage of what already exists underscores the importance of authenticity, stability, and strategic utilization.

Organizations that master this balance position themselves for sustainable growth, resilience, and adaptability in an ever-changing business environment. The key takeaway is that successful cultural management is not just about creating new norms but about thoughtfully harnessing the strengths embedded within the existing cultural fabric, while selectively introducing and aligning new elements to meet strategic objectives.

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About the Author

[Insert author bio here, emphasizing expertise in organizational development, change management, or related fields.]

This comprehensive exploration underscores that managing organizational culture effectively hinges on understanding and leveraging existing elements while strategically shaping new ones, all within a framework of continuous alignment and adaptation.

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