Organizational Culture and Knowledge Management

CHAPTER 15

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Chapter Outline

Learning Objectives

After reading and studying this chapter and doing the exercises, you should be able to:

1. Describe three aspects of organizational culture: how it is determined, its dimensions, and how it is learned.
2. Explain some of the major consequences and implications of organizational culture.
3. Identify the building blocks of a learning organization.
4. Pinpoint strategies and techniques for knowledge management.
5. Specify methods for sharing information within an organization.

In the mid-2020s, Michael (Mike) Wirth, the CEO of Chevron, was intent on redefining the organization's culture and competitive stance. The Chevron culture was traditionally perceived as kinder in comparison to chief rival ExxonMobil, long-known for more aggressiveness. In recognition of investors being skeptical of Chevron's future profitability, Wirth believed that a shift toward more assertiveness was required. Market pressures, including falling oil prices and reduced drilling, further pointed toward the need for cost cutting that included a $2 billion reduction in costs and a 20 percent reduction of the workforce.

To trigger a change in Chevron culture, Wirth had a harsh message for the company's 40,000 employees: Stop being so nice to work associates. Wirth and his top-management team wanted leaders to be more decisive, take accountability for mistakes and failures, and have frank conversations about subpar performance. It was hoped that a change in attitude could prevent Chevron from falling behind its competitors.

Chevron executives hired McKinsey in 2024 as its share price lagged those of ExxonMobil and parts of its oil business were struggling. Chevron began getting tougher on not just employees but also on competitors, political detractors, and any other company outsiders. The initiatives to overhaul Chevron's corporate culture stemmed from a report from McKinsey that concluded a high level of frustration among employees. Employees believed that Chevron was not innovative, and it lacked a clear strategy. Employee feedback suggested that "We are 'nice' even when desired results or behaviors are not achieved.… We emphasize collaboration and inclusion to build strong teams, but we do not have direct, uncomfortable conversations needed to deliver results."

Wirth said that he was incredibly proud of the Chevron culture. He explained, "We're working to further strengthen our culture with an even sharper focus on performance by executing faster and more efficiently, simplifying our organization, and delivering targeted innovation." The company's statement of its organization culture centers on "The Chevron Way," that emphasizes safety, trust, integrity, and high performance. Included also is a strong focus on valuing people as Chevron's key asset. Another part of the culture is a collaborative, team-oriented environment, the promotion of a work/family balance, while striving for leadership in safe, reliable energy.

Despite the corporate initiatives toward toughness, several critical questions remained: Would it be possible for Chevron to reinvent its corporate culture? Would a more aggressive stance get Chevron beyond its reputation as "second best"? And, of key importance, would a tougher work environment translate into higher productivity?[1]

The story about Chevron just presented illustrates the relevance and impact of organizational (or corporate) culture. The concept of corporate culture is so well known and relevant that it has been the subject of articles in popular magazines. For example, an article in *Rolling Stone* claimed, "Culture has always had influence, but in 2026, it becomes the headliner. Not the opener. Not the background. The star."[2] Furthermore, according to a survey, highlighting the company culture is done by 73 percent of recruiters to compete against other employers. (Better benefits come in second at 54 percent.[3])

In this chapter we discuss organizational culture and how to understand it. The present chapter also emphasizes a topic closely related to culture—how an organization as an entity makes good use of knowledge, including getting workers to effectively share their knowledge with each other.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture The values and norms that define what is and is not appropriate behavior for employees.

As implied in previous mentions of the term, **organizational culture** is the values and norms that define what is and is not appropriate behavior for employees. The norms point to "how we do things here."[4] Dustin Staley, a managing director of healthcare, offers a definition of what organizational culture means in practice: "Simply put, culture is the workplace experience that both shape beliefs and drive actions and results."[5]

Organizational psychologist Edgar Schein was the first management theorist to define the corporate culture and to explain how the culture is such a dominant force in organizations. Much of his original thinking has influenced these more recent ideas about organizational culture.[6] Organizational culture may be considered a soft concept, yet the culture itself is quite durable. Having the right organizational culture can bring a strategic advantage to a company.[7] Culture is considered to be among the primary levers at the disposal of organization leaders to maintain organizational viability and effectiveness.

An entrenched culture might take ten years to change, such as a smug and insular company becoming more open to ideas and new ways of doing things. A specific example is the difficulty top management at the Coca-Cola Company faced for years in getting people to believe that, for the company to continue to prosper in the long run, it must not rely so heavily on carbonated beverages for its revenues. As described later in the chapter, becoming a learning organization helped Coca-Cola survive and prosper.

The term *organizational climate* is close in meaning to the organizational culture, and the study of climate predates the study of culture. Climate is about the measurable properties of the perceived work environment that influence the motivation and performance of workers.[8] For example, workers might perceive a company to have a good safety climate or a strong digital climate. (Both are measurable, whereas culture is usually more difficult to measure.) Organizational climate remains an important part of organizational behavior.

Our study of organizational culture focuses on its determinants, its dimensions, how it is learned, and its consequences.

Determinants of Organizational Culture

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1
Describe three aspects of organizational culture: how it is determined, its dimensions, and how it is learned.

Many forces shape a firm's culture. Often its origin lies in the values, administrative practices, and personality of the founder or founders. Also, the leader's vision can have a heavy impact on culture. An example is John Chambers, the former CEO of Cisco Systems, who dreamed of Cisco becoming one of the world's greatest companies. A historically important example of the impact of a leader on culture is Herb Kelleher, the founder of Southwest Airlines, who is considered pivotal in shaping one of the most distinctive organizational cultures. Up until Kelleher's retirement, Southwest was considered very dependent on his personality and character. After his retirement for health reasons, his personality could still be felt. At the core of Southwest are the values of humor and altruism. For example, Southwest employees have established a catastrophe fund to help workers who need more assistance than usual employee benefits cover. Also, flight attendants and pilots use jokes and games to put customers at ease (a practice now copied by several other airlines).[9]

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At the core of the Southwest culture are the values of humor and altruism.

Organizational culture responds to and mirrors the conscious and unconscious choices, behavior patterns, and prejudices of top-level managers. As the founders leave or become less active, other top-level managers help define the culture.

The culture of the society in which a firm operates also helps determine its culture. Sooner or later, society's norms, beliefs, and values find their way into the firm. Societal values are communicated through means such as the media, conversations, and education. The emphasis on sexual and racial equality in U.S. society has become incorporated into the value culture of many employers. The emphasis on collegiality translates into harmony and cooperation in the workplace at many Scandinavian companies, including Ikea. Another perspective on national culture is that the introduction of values from another society into a retail business can be a competitive advantage. For example, the Korean values of high quality and reliability, and spotless factories, have helped fuel the success of the Hyundai and Kia car brands in the United States.

The industry to which a firm belongs helps shape its culture; for example, the culture of a high-tech firm is quite different from that of a meat-packing facility. A public utility will have a culture different from a food manufacturer of comparable size. Heavy competition and low profit margins may force the food manufacturer to operate at a faster pace than the utility, which has more limited competition. Because of deregulation, competition among utilities has increased in recent years even though they face a less competitive environment than many manufacturers.

Another perspective on the determinants of organizational culture is the methods organizations use to build their workplace culture. According to a human resources research report, the six most frequent ways for organizations to build and maintain a strong workplace culture are as follows:

- Include mission and values in onboarding (employee orientation): 68 percent.
- Include mission and values in company communications: 67 percent.
- Include cultural elements in learning and development: 54 percent.
- Build culture into the work processes: 50 percent.
- Hire for cultural fit (new hire fits the culture): 49 percent.
- Make culture a part of the employee review process: 8 percent.[10]

An interpretation of the information in this section is that the corporate culture is determined and built in a variety of ways. This interpretation is not surprising because organizational culture encompasses many different ideas.

Employees themselves often contribute to the development of the organization's culture. They often develop traditions of their own that help create the culture, such as welcoming and being highly supportive of new team members. At the Toronto-based recruitment agency, Creative Niche, employees initiated a monthly tradition called Third Thursdays in which two team members plan a shared experience for the rest of the company. Among the shared experiences have been flower arranging, a yoga class, and trivia night. All the activities are intended to help employees step out of their routine and connect with each other.[11]

Dimensions of Organizational Culture

The dimensions, or elements, of culture help explain the nature of the subtle forces that influence employee actions. For example, a culture that values risk taking encourages employees to try new ways of doing things. The employees will do so without concern that they will be punished for failed ideas. The following list describes 15 influential dimensions of culture. How much workers are influenced by each dimension depends on its *tightness*, or how tightly the behavior of workers is controlled by the value or norm. Tightness also refers to how strictly the value or norm is enforced. For example, the norm of providing excellent customer service might be enforced by reprimands for employees who do not provide excellent customer service.


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How quickly people make decisions is part of the organizational culture.

The foundation of any organizational culture is values. A firm's philosophy is expressed through values, and values guide behavior daily. Values shape or form the dimensions of organizational culture. Values also contribute directly to the ethical atmosphere within a firm. An ethical workplace starts at the top of the organization. HR (human resources) professionals within organizations, however, are expected by the Society for Resource Management (SHRM) to influence others to behave in an ethical manner and also perform as an ethical role model.[12]

A positive value that contributes to a healthy organizational culture is a high regard for human welfare, exhibited in programs and policies that enhance employee health and well-being. The Cisco well-being platform described in Chapter 13 is an illustration of this value in practice.

A subtle, but key, point about dimensions is that they link closely with the consequences of organizational culture. For example, if a culture had a dimension of innovation, it has a good chance of succeeding in a marketplace demanding innovative products and services.

1. *Organizational stories with underlying meanings and myths.* Stories are circulated in many organizations to reinforce principles that top management thinks are important. An oft-repeated story is how company officials or other workers inconvenienced themselves to satisfy a customer or client need, such as foraging through a salvage yard to find a replacement part for a customer's old machine. Myths are dramatic narratives or imagined events about the firm's history. (A myth is more exaggerated than an organizational story but can be true.) Myths contribute to corporate legends, help unify groups, and can build competitive advantage. At United Parcel Service (UPS), for example, stories are repeated about drivers overcoming severe obstacles or reaching inaccessible locations to deliver packages.

   According to Ron Storn, VP of People at the ride-sharing service Lyft, one of the company's key values is to uplift people. The following story reinforces this value and helps uplift company employees: During a meeting of all Lyft employees, a woman stood on the stage and told the story of how a Lyft driver drove her daughter to safety from a vicious roommate and helped her pack and unpack her belongings into a hotel room. A photo of the driver smiling appeared on the screen behind the choked-up mother as she recounted the impact the driver's kindness had on her, the daughter, and the rest of the family.[13]
2. *Degree of change.* The culture in a fast-paced, dynamic organization differs from that of a slow-paced, stable one. A highly competitive environment might encourage a fast-paced climate. Top-level managers, by the energy or lethargy of their stance, send signals about how much they welcome innovation. The degree of change also influences whether a culture can take root and how strong that culture can be.
3. *Intensity of work.* Organizations vary considerably in how long and hard employees typically work. The expectations for intensity of work are a part of the culture that affects most employees. In an artificial intelligence (AI) startup or an investment bank, employees would be expected to work intensely for more than 40 hours per week. In a culture that values overwork, managers reward employees who stay late and send frequent emails outside of typical working hours.[14] The culture of a family-friendly company such as The Honest Company would accept a more relaxed approach to work.
4. *Collaboration and teamwork.* To function effectively, most organizations require a culture that emphasizes people working collaboratively and regarding work as a team effort. Based on her experience as an executive coach, Lolly Daskal writes that a culture of collaboration is characterized by organizational members frequently asking questions and using such phrases as "What do you think?" "I appreciate your effort." "Let's solve this together" and "How can I help?"[15]
5. *Resource allocations and rewards.* The ways in which money and other resources are allocated have a critical influence on culture. The investment of resources sends a message about what the firm values. A basic example is the allocation of bonuses at an investment bank when wealth managers receive bonuses five times as large as those given to HR professionals in the firm.
6. *Rites and rituals.* Part of a firm's culture is made up of its traditions, or its rites and rituals. Alain Hunkins, the CEO of a leadership consulting firm, says that a ritual is a repeated action with meaning, emotion, and shared experience. An example of a ritual is the daily seven-minute huddle that requires teams to answer three questions: "What are we focused on today?" "What's in our way?" and "Who needs help?"[16]

   Few companies think they have rites and rituals, yet an astute observer can identify them. Examples include regular staff meetings, company picnics, retirement banquets (even for fired executives), and receptions for visiting dignitaries. A customer-related ritual is to celebrate customers who make a major purchase, such as associates clapping and smiling at CarMax when a customer leaves the lot with a vehicle just purchased from the dealer.

Celebrations are a meaningful aspect of company rituals.

7. *A sense of ownership.* The movement toward stock ownership for an increasing number of employees has created an ownership culture in many firms, in which workers are inspired to think and act like owners. An ownership culture includes increased loyalty, improved work effort, and the alignment of worker interests with those of the company. An ownership culture can be reflected in everyday actions, such as conserving electricity, making gradual improvements, and not tolerating sloppy work by coworkers.
8. *Belief in a higher purpose.* A dominant characteristic of many of the companies judged to be The 100 Best Companies to Work For is that employees have a sense of purpose. Employees derive deep satisfaction from feeling what they do is good and right. A belief in a higher purpose is easy to understand if one works for a pharmaceutical company. Employees of some financial services firms also believe that they are occupying a useful role in society. For example, at Edward Jones, the financial services giant, helping achieve financial security is part of the mission.[17]
9. *Information sharing.* A key value that enhances problem solving and creativity is the willingness of employees to share useful knowledge with work associates. Many workers believe that private knowledge gives them a competitive edge over coworkers and are concerned about others taking credit for their ideas. To cultivate the sharing of useful information, the manager must therefore emphasize the value of sharing and explain how it contributes to organizational effectiveness.
10. *Innovativeness and organizational ambidexterity.* A cultural dimension of significance in most fields is the innovative spirit of the workforce. As described in Chapter 5 in the section about creativity, an environment that encourages innovation contributes to individual creativity. The study of innovation will be introduced again in Chapter 16 about organizational change. Organizational ambidexterity is a flexible approach to innovation that is part of the culture. The term refers to the ability of an organization to efficiently take advantage of existing market opportunities while at the same time creating and innovating to meet the challenges of future markets.[18] The ambidextrous organization helps build excitement into the culture as the firm prospers in the present and has even better prospects for the future. Google Inc. is an ideal example as it prospers now and looks to future projects, such as a driverless automobile, wearable technology (including computer chips inserted in clothing), and a partnership in developing a longevity drug.

Owning company stock can contribute to a feeling of loyalty.

11. *Organizational justice.* A highly meaningful aspect of organizational culture for employees is what they perceive to be a climate of justice or fairness throughout the organization. Justice refers to how fairly employees are treated by organizational authorities. A climate of justice has three components: organizational decisions (distributive justice); decision-making procedures (procedural justice); and the quality of

interpersonal treatment as part of these procedures (interpersonal justice). Visualize an employee who was accused of making private use of company equipment, such as using a company pickup truck to haul firewood for his house. He would look at the decision about any reprimands, the steps taken to decide on the punishment, and with how much dignity he was treated while being reprimanded for the rule infraction.

An organizational climate perceived to be fair and just is likely to enhance job satisfaction, productivity, customer satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior.[19] (Of course, if the worker in question was simply advised to "not do it again," he would perceive the company to be highly just.)

12. *Orientation toward serving customers.* Virtually every business organization, non-profit organization, or government agency believes that providing good service to customers or clients is important. When a climate of good service toward customers is combined with an ethical climate, business performance tends to be strong. A study with 16,862 medical sales representatives across 77 subsidiary companies of a multinational health-care enterprise supported the relationship just mentioned. Profitability was enhanced in customer-service-oriented firms that also emphasized good ethics.[20]
13. *Joy and happiness.* An important dimension of organizational culture from the standpoint of employees is the extent of joy and happiness that pervades the organization. Joy and happiness are a component of the emotional culture. An outstanding example is Vail Resorts Inc., where management recognizes that cultivating joy among employees also facilitates customers having fun, which has a big impact in the hospitality business. (Vail, Colorado, is a world-famous ski resort, but the company also has 15 other locations.) CEO Bob Katz espouses "Have fun" as a corporate value. Resort managers model joy regularly and prescribe it for their teams. For example, ski-lift operators are often seen dancing, making jokes, and doing whatever is necessary to entertain guests while still emphasizing ski safety.[21]
14. *Family friendliness.* A family-friendly culture respects the challenges that workers with families often face. This problem was described in Chapter 13 with respect to work and personal life conflict. For many organizations today, flexible work schedules and some hybrid work are standard practice. In a family-friendly work culture, colleagues would not be shocked because a key member of the group had to miss a meeting to take a child to the dentist.
15. *Inclusiveness of all stakeholders.* Inclusivity is an important dimension or organizational culture. Inclusion has been mentioned at multiple places in the book already and is covered extensively in Chapter 17. The general idea is that in an inclusive organizational culture, stakeholders from all demographic and cultural groups who want to contribute positively to the organization are welcome. The stakeholders include employees, customers, suppliers, bankers, union officials, and government inspectors.

In addition to the dominant culture of a firm, the subculture also influences behavior. A **subculture** is a pocket in which the organizational culture differs from the dominant culture, as well as other pockets of subculture. In a bank, the consumer loan division may have a culture different from that of the mortgage group because the consumer group has to work with much shorter time frames in processing loans.

Subculture A pocket in which the organizational culture differs from the dominant culture, as well as other pockets of subculture.

Figure 15-1 presents key aspects of the organizational culture of business firms most likely to be familiar to you. Scanning Figure 15-1, combined with other references to culture in this chapter and elsewhere in the book, will add to your understanding of organizational culture.

How Workers Learn the Culture

Socialization The process of coming to understand the values, norms, and customs essential for adapting to an organization.

Employees learn the organizational culture primarily through **socialization**, the process of coming to understand the values, norms, and customs essential for adapting to the

FIGURE 15-1 A Sampling of Organizational Cultures of Well-Known Companies

Google (major division of Alphabet Inc.)—Has been designated as the tech company with the best corporate culture. A core belief of the Google culture is that a happy and engaged workforce powers results. CEO Sundar Pichai wrote in a company-wide email, "We have a timeless mission, enduring values, and a culture of collaboration and exploration that makes it exciting to come to work every day." Employees are inspired by Google's purpose: "To organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful." High job satisfaction is emphasized through such perks as free meals, on-site massages and dry cleaning, and flexible work schedules. Employees are given the freedom to think creatively and innovatively and are encouraged to have fun at work, including bringing their dogs to work. Collaboration and teams and the physical layout of office spaces are among the many ways to support and inspire innovative thinking. Company leadership heavily emphasizes continuous learning and development. Employees label themselves "Googlers" and believe they are a superior group of people, with some saying that it is more difficult to be hired by Google than to be accepted into Harvard.

IKEA—Egalitarian values run deep in the company, including a de-emphasis on rank. The U.S. president carries the title "country manager." Only the CEO has an assistant. Very informal culture with roots in Swedish culture, yet the culture is quite strong in terms of worker commitment to the culture. The company is very collegial and friendly. Emphasis on informality, cost-consciousness, and a humble, down-to-earth approach. A strong corporate value is that it is a virtue to be frugal. Simplicity, such as not having overly complicated work procedures, is also valued. Workers are allowed considerable responsibility. The company culture emphasizes equality for employees and sustainability for the environment. Managers have a "go bananas card" that gives employees permission to take a risk without fear of punishment for a poor result. The IKEA CHRO believes that a company's culture is its "superpower" because people love to work for the company and stay.

Nike—The culture emphasizes innovation, inclusivity, and a continuous pursuit of excellence. Collaboration is a cornerstone cultural value. Teamwork is promoted across all levels of the company to ensure that diverse perspectives are heard and integrated into decision making. High performance and accountability are part of the culture. Go-it-alone, insular culture characterized by a desire for growth within, rather than taking on the hassles of integrating a merger with another company. Very difficult for outside executives to be accepted by the inner circle. An attitude of secrecy and exclusivity around projects pervades the company. Employees are so loyal that many of them tattoo a Nike "swoosh" onto their legs. The company believes in building a culture of belonging, rooted in diversity and inclusion. Varied perspectives are welcome to contribute to the strong culture of innovation. Continuous learning and personal development receive priority. A statement in the company mission helps drive its growth: "If you have a body, you are an athlete."

Home Depot—A key feature of the company culture is the inverted pyramid that explains how stakeholders are prioritized. Customers are the top priority, followed by frontline associates, field support and corporate support are in the middle, and the CEO comes last. (Not to be interpreted that the CEO is paid less than a store associate!) Rowdy corporate culture, with the idea of growing big and fast. Workers used to drive forklift trucks through aisles with customers around. Dedication to helping customers by offering practical solutions to household problems. Cultural diversity is highly valued as reflected in the mix of their workforce. Customer diversity is highly valued as reflected in the posting of the languages spoken by store associates (especially in mixed ethnic neighborhoods). From open-floor office to open-door ethos, the Home Depot culture is rooted in improving, evolving, and having fun at work.

Southwest Airlines—Strong, trusting partnerships between managers and workers and unions that allow all concerned to execute the intricacies of an airline running smoothly. Strong emphasis on valuing human resources and intrinsic job satisfaction. A principle underlying the corporate culture is that employees who are taken care of properly will provide the highest-quality output. Hilarious safety announcements are a company ritual, such as "If you have more than one child, put a safety mask on the one you love the most." Positive job attitude, a key hiring factor. Emphasis on a relaxed work environment in which employees are regarded as even more important than Southwest customers. Three key corporate values are "a warrior spirit," "a servant's heart," and "a fun-luving (meaning loving) heart." Creating a fun-loving culture and giving priority to employee happiness is said to have made a major contribution to the success of Southwest.

FIGURE 15-1 A Sampling of Organizational Cultures of Well-Known Companies *(Continued)*

Apple Inc.—A strong cultural attitude of being winners who have changed and continue to change the world. The Apple corporate culture includes a human resource policy of hiring top-notch candidates. Considerable emphasis on cognitive intelligence and creativity, combined with the smug attitude that people who work at lesser companies are less intelligent and imaginative. Very little tolerance for poor performance. The Apple culture supports rapid innovation. The company emphasizes secrecy about its products and services and emphasizes obsessive attention to details. Employees are expected to keep company information and property tightly secured. Company encourages a moderate level of competition among teams to drive growth and improve output. Apple is more sociable and less combative than in the past but remains moderately combative in the form of challenging employees about what they are accomplishing.

Sources: "Google's Company Culture: Unveiling Organizational Values," *Culture Partners* (www.culturepartners.com), April 16, 2024, pp. 1–8; "Google—A Tech Titan with the Best Corporate Culture," *Fang Path* (https://fangpath.com), July 13, 2021, p. 3; Sam Forsdick, "Ikea's CHRO on Why Culture Is the Company's 'Superpower,'" *Raconteur* (www.raconteur.net), April 12, 2024, pp. 1–4; Beth Kowitt, "At Ikea: No Ranks, No Rancor," *Fortune*, March 14, 2016, pp. 202–203; "IKEA Navigates the Future While Staying True to Its Culture," *Working Knowledge* (https://hbswk.hbs.edu), June 15, 2021, pp. 1–14; "Nike Company Culture: A Complete Breakdown of the Culture of Innovation," *Culture Monkey* (www.culturemonkey.IO), August 28, 2024, pp. 1–10; "How Nike Is Building on Diversity and Inclusion to Advance Sustainability," *Nike News* (https://news.nike.com), October 15, 2021, pp. 1–3; Andrew Thompson, "The Home Depot Culture: An Analysis," *Panmore* (www.panmore.com), July 9, 2024, pp. 1–4; "The Culture at Home Depot," *Zippia* (www.zippia.com), 2022, p. 1; Aixa M. Pascual, "Tidying Up at Home Depot," *Business Week*, November 26, 2001, pp. 102–104; Lisa Brown, "Southwest Airlines' Organizational Culture & Its Characteristics," *Panmore* (www.panmore.com), March 8, 2026, pp. 1–4; "Behind the Southwest Airline Culture" (www.forbes.com), November 21, 2013, pp. 1–3; Gustavo Razzetti, "Southwest Airlines Culture Design Puts Employees First," *Fearless Culture* (www.fearlessculture.design/blog), January 12, 2020, pp. 1–3; Pauline Meyer, "Apple's Company Culture: An Organizational Analysis," *Panmore* (www.panmore.com), October 7, 2025, pp. 1–7; Thao Nguyen Le, "Inside Apple's Company Culture: Collaborative and Inspiring," *Work Pulse* (https://grovehr.com), 2021, pp. 1–7. Some of the observations are based on scattered comments from employees of the above companies.

organization. Socialization is therefore a method of indoctrinating employees into the organization in such a way that they perpetuate the culture. The socialization process takes place mostly by learning through imitation and observation.

Another important way in which workers learn the culture is through the teachings of leaders, as implied in the cultural dimension of resource allocations and rewards. Organizational members learn the culture to some extent by observing what leaders pay attention to, measure, and control.[22] Suppose a coworker of yours is praised publicly for doing community service. You are likely to conclude that an important part of the culture is to help people outside the company. Senior executives will sometimes publicly express expectations that help shape the culture of the firm. At Paychex Inc., the founder and former chairman, Tom Golisano, set the tone for a practical-minded, action-oriented culture with dedicated managers. (Golisano also became a major philanthropist.) He reflected:

> We expect our senior management to be hands on. And I think when you talk to a lot of people who come from larger organizations, a lot of times they come from a different culture and it's hard for them to adapt. They expect in most cases a much healthier benefits and wage package, okay? They expect larger support staffs. They expect a little more freedom in their time and movement than we're willing to give them.[23]

A recommended way of learning the culture when entering an organization is to find a cultural mentor, someone who can help you comprehend and navigate the unwritten codes of the new culture. For example, an unwritten or implicit code in the company might be to show considerable respect for the opinions of senior management. An effective cultural mentor would be someone who understands deeply the company, wants you to succeed, and will give you objective information. This mentor might be someone you knew from outside the company, such as a former classmate.[24]

The Consequences and Implications of Organizational Culture

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 2
Explain some of the major consequences and implications of organizational culture.

Depending on its strength, a firm's organizational culture can have a pervasive impact on organizational effectiveness, as illustrated in the chapter-opening story about Chevron. Employees of a firm with a strong (or tight) culture will follow its values with little

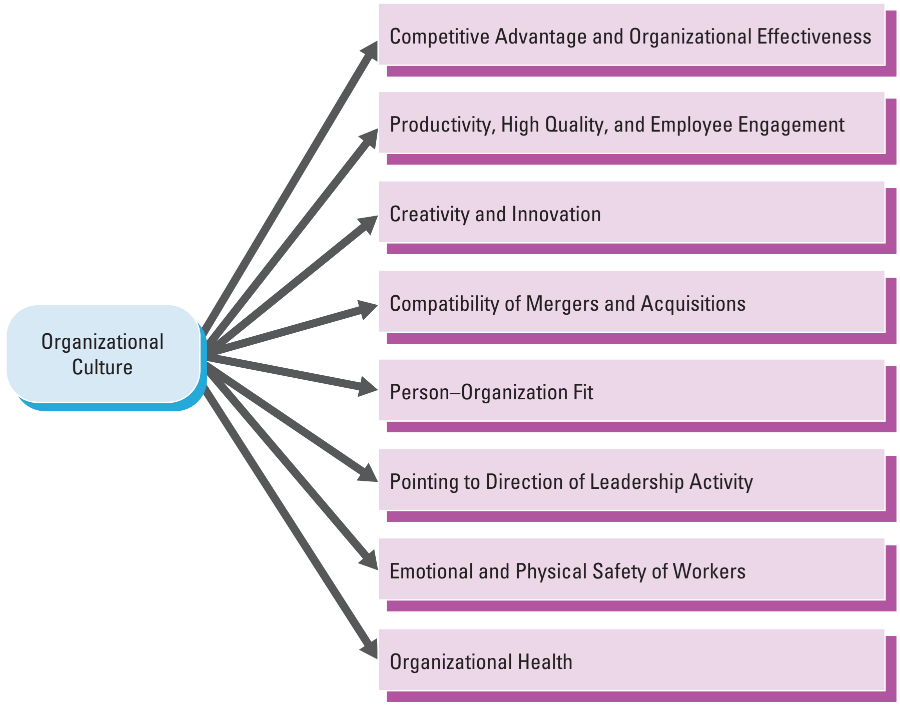

FIGURE 15-2 Consequences and Implications of Organizational Culture

questioning. A weaker (or looser) culture provides only broad guidelines to members. Eight major consequences and implications of organizational culture are outlined in Figure 15-2 and summarized next.

1. *Competitive advantage and organizational effectiveness.* The right organizational culture contributes to gaining competitive advantage in several ways, including increased market share, profit, and smooth functioning of the organization. Much of Google's success has been attributed to its corporate culture.
2. *Productivity, quality, and engagement.* The consequence of competitive advantage and organizational effectiveness often happens because a culture that emphasizes productivity, including high quality, encourages workers to be productive and engaged. A culture that values the dignity of human beings fosters high morale, job satisfaction, and employee engagement. A human resource management specialist has observed that if corporate stewards tend the culture well, they will have an engaged and committed workforce for many years. According to a Flexjobs survey of 2,600 U.S. workers, a toxic workplace culture was the third most frequent reason workers give for wanting to quit.[25] The consistently strong performance of Southwest Airlines is partially attributed to its humane and fun-loving culture that leads to high job satisfaction and motivation, often resulting in high productivity.
3. *Creativity and innovation.* A major contributor to innovation is a corporate culture that encourages creative behavior. Gary Hamel has identified specific features of a culture that inspire innovation, including setting very high expectations, creating a cause about which workers can be passionate, encouraging radical ideas, and allowing talented people in the company to easily transfer to different business areas within the firm. Also, innovators must be paid exceptionally well.[26]
4. *Compatibility of mergers and acquisitions.* A reliable predictor of success in merging two or more firms is the compatibility of their respective cultures. When the cultures clash, such as a bureaucratic firm merging with a team-oriented one, the result can be negative synergy. In a McKinsey survey of 1,000 merger and acquisition leaders, 44 percent cited "lack of cultural fit" and "friction between the acquiring and target companies" as major reasons that integrations fail.[27] A cultural clash between mergers is often manifested in such small items as the members of one

company wearing sandals and tank tops to work, versus the members of the other company preferring more formal business attire. A deeper aspect of a culture clash is a different cultural value about the importance of working hard and long.

5. *Person–organization fit.* An important success factor for the individual is finding an organization that fits that individual's personality. Similarly, an organization will be more successful when the personalities of most members fit its culture. Johnny C. Taylor, the CEO of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), says that workplace cultures should be factored into recruiting and hiring decisions. When people are hired whose values do not match those of the organization, these workers are likely to not fully engage. The problem is that they oppose the corporate philosophy or do not agree with how the company operates.[28]

   In one study, organizations were measured on dimensions such as stability, experimenting, risk taking, and an orientation toward rules. The preferences of professional employees regarding culture were measured and compared with the culture of their firms. Good person–organization fits result in more commitment and higher job satisfaction.[29]

6. *Pointing to direction of leadership activity.* Much of a top-level manager's time is spent working with the forces that shape the attitudes and values of employees at all levels. A key leadership role is to establish what type of culture is needed for the firm and then shape the existing culture to match that ideal. A frequent role for company leaders today is to establish a culture that welcomes new technology, such as artificial intelligence, in all business functions. The CEO might therefore ask for regular updates on the progress of introducing AI into all aspects of the organization.

7. *Emotional and physical safety of workers.* An organizational culture in which rudeness, incivility, and sexual harassment are discouraged and punished increases the probability of workers feeling safe emotionally and physically. In contrast, a culture that tolerates or ignores these negative behaviors leads to many workers feeling threatened and intimidated. In addition to the voluntary turnover toxic work climates create, as cited previously, there are other negative consequences. Toxic workplaces have been shown to trigger conflict, lowered productivity, and in some cases post-traumatic stress disorder.[30]

8. *Organizational health.* A culture that facilitates attaining the previous seven consequences would result in a strong and healthy organization. As defined by the consultancy McKinsey & Company, organizational health is an organization's ability to align around a common vision and execute against that vision effectively. The healthy organization also renews itself through innovation and creative thinking."[31] Organizations possessing good organizational health can move quickly, assess risks, and make decisions that facilitate growth, innovation, and increased profits.[32] The concept of organizational health is so broad that it encompasses many different methods and techniques of organizational behavior, including creative problem solving and leadership among many others described in this book.

Building Blocks of a Learning Organization

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 3
Identify the building blocks of a learning organization.

Learning organization An organization that is skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge and at modifying behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights.

Closely related to organizational culture and change is the idea that an effective organization engages in continuous learning by proactively adapting to the external environment. A **learning organization** is one that is skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge and at modifying behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights.[33] Although we speak of organizational learning, it is still individual people who create the conditions for such learning. Our approach to understanding the learning organization will be to describe a sampling of its building blocks or components.

To become and remain a learning organization, certain characteristics and behaviors are required of organizational members, as described next.[34] Although organizational theorists speak of a learning organization, the workers do the learning. The collective wisdom of the workers might then translate into a learning organization.

Iakov Filimonov/Shutterstock

Group learning is a key part of organizational learning.

Double-Loop Learning

Double-loop learning A change in behavior that occurs when people use feedback to confront the validity of the goal or the values implicit in the situation.

An in-depth, non-defensive type of learning takes place in a learning organization. **Double-loop learning** occurs when people use feedback to confront the validity of the goal or the values implicit in the situation. When you engage in double-loop learning, you change the governing values or assumptions themselves. As a result, you change your actions. A conventional-thinking manager (one who engages in single-loop learning) at a tire distributor observes that sales have been declining (feedback from the environment). The manager then asks, "How can we more effectively market retread tires for automobiles?" As a double-loop learner, the same manager might ask, 'Why are we even selling retreads for the automotive market? The demand is declining, and they are not very safe." Note that the sales manager is being open and non-defensive about the product line and is changing the assumption that retreaded tires even make a contribution to society.

Systems Thinking

In the learning organization, members regard the organization as a system in which everybody's work affects the activities of everybody else. Systems thinking also means keeping the big picture foremost in everybody's mind and being keenly aware of the external environment. This is true because the organization is part of a system that includes the outside world. A systems thinker at Brooks Brothers said about 20 years ago, "The trend even among affluent businesspeople is away from our ultraconservative image. Our customer base is declining. If we don't want Brooks Brothers to be perceived as a museum of fashions past, we had better modify our product line." Brooks Brothers was able to modify its product image just enough to satisfy the modern conservative dresser without alienating its remaining die-hard ultraconservatives. Each store has elegant products to satisfy the conservative and ultraconservative dresser.

Team Learning

A learning organization emphasizes collective problem solving. Members freely share information and opinions with one another to facilitate problem solving. Team learning can take place in several ways. The basic approach is to use group problem solving throughout the firm. However, a large firm might bring people together at a retreat where they work in teams to reflect on ways of improving the organization.

Personal Mastery of the Job

Continuous learning usually is required to master a job in the modern organization. Three major examples are learning AI as it applies to the job, understanding how to use analytics, and learning more about different cultures. For continuous learning to take place, each member must develop expertise. Quite often this detail is overlooked because of the emphasis on learning in groups. Collective learning is much more productive when every member of the group brings something valuable to the table.

Translation of New Knowledge into New Ways of Behaving

Given that learning involves a change in behavior, a true learning organization translates knowledge into action. Learning at a superficial level would occur if managers attended a seminar on expectancy theory and simply retained key principles. Members of a learning organization would *apply* expectancy theory, such as giving workers assurances that they would receive anticipated rewards for attaining goals.

Learning from Other Organizations

Some of the best insights an organization can acquire stem from studying competitors and other firms. Borrowing ideas from the competition, also known as "benchmarking," took place long before the concept of a learning organization arose. A learning organization systematizes the process while at the same time attempting to be ethical. "Learning from others" is most ethical when the learning does not directly capitalize on an idea a competitor spent considerable time and money developing.

Substantial learning can take place in copying the practices of firms not directly in your line of business. Suppose you would like to establish a worldwide method of distributing hard-to-get automobile parts, like a carburetor for a 1956 Edsel. You carefully study the marketing techniques of Amazon.com and Alibaba.com. You set up an elaborate system, copy the order and shipping process of these firms, and call yourself Oldautoparts.com. Because your benchmarking targets do not distribute hard-to-find auto parts, nobody gets hurt. You are a learning organization without directly copying another company's ideas.

An example of a company with a learning-obsessed culture is WD-40. The company produces WD-40, a powerful lubricant for metal parts that also aids in the removal of rust. Comparable brands exist, but WD-40 is used in four out of five American households and almost all factories, mines, and construction sites in the country. When Garry Ridge became CEO of WD-40 in 1987, he recognized that the company had become too dependent on its one, almost cult-like product. He decided to build an organizational culture that emphasized learning. Part of his solution was for everyone at the company to take the "WD-40 Maniac Pledge," a vow to become a "learning maniac." Company employees call themselves "tribe members," a term indicating their commitment to each other, to learning, and the organization's shared values.

Ridge demanded that his management team become more interested in possibilities for the organization, its products, and the brand. He placed a premium on learning, experimenting, and improvising, transforming an old business into a vibrant company. Ridge used the term "learning moments" in place of "mistakes." Instead of employees being punished for mistakes, they are expected to reflect on them, learn, and grow intellectually.

WD-40 sells its products in 176 countries and has launched a collection of new brands and products. Two other well-known company products are 3-in-One Oil and Lava hand soap for heavy-duty cleaning.[35]

The accompanying Organizational Behavior in Action box describes how one of the world's best-known consumer product companies became a learning organization.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 4
Pinpoint strategies and techniques for knowledge management.

Knowledge Management

A major consequence of a learning organization is that knowledge is managed more effectively. **Knowledge management (KM)** is a systematic approach to documenting, applying, and transferring the know-how and experience of employees.[36] A major objective of knowledge management is to make effective use of the vast store of useful information and experience possessed by employees. Often this knowledge has to be transferred to affiliates in other countries and with different cultures.

Knowledge management (KM)
The systematic sharing of information to achieve advances in innovation, efficiency, and competitive advantage.

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR IN ACTION

Coca-Cola, The Learning Organization

The global head of talent and development at Coca-Cola, Tapaswee Chandele, says that in 2017, the company began a journey to change its culture. She said, "We need to have lots of curiosity about how things could be different, could be better, and how we respond to the way things are changing." Courage was needed to try new things. Company leadership recognized that it was time to evolve into a total beverage company and focus more intently on the needs of consumers. The company wanted to build a high-performing and learning organization that is humble and agile.

Chandele said that as the business context continues to change, Coca-Cola believes its ability to unlock change requires the company to become a learning organization. She defines a learning organization as one that has the capacity to continuously reinvent itself. Part of being a learning organization at the Coca-Cola Company is to encourage experimentation, perceive failure to be a normal part of growing, and not wait for a perfect product before going to market. Company leadership regards accepting failure as being part of a growth mindset because failures provide good lessons and give workers the opportunity to start over and do things better. (At Coca-Cola, a growth mindset is a shared belief in continuous learning to improve both the business and the workers.) Coca-Cola leadership believes that a culture with a growth mindset has helped the company stay ahead of the competition and maintain a significant market share.

A major step in becoming a learning organization was for Coca-Cola to define its growth behaviors that established clear expectations for all employees. The growth behaviors were communicated in a way for all employees to understand, embrace, and model good examples. (An example of a growth behavior might be to seek feedback from store managers and consumers about how they felt Coca-Cola products fared against the competition.) Another way of implementing a learning organization was to encourage an employee with one good idea to pursue it and keep iterating as progress is made.

One of the many steps Coca-Cola leaders took to enhance learning and change the culture was to establish innovation awards. Global Innovation Awards were established for employees and teams to be recognized in person by the boards of directors and executive leadership team. The awards celebrate three categories of innovation: innovation success, innovation experiments, and failures. The award for failure was to celebrate failure as a learning opportunity and make failure acceptable and a normal way of working. Accepting failed attempts at innovation was seen as a major cultural shift at Coca-Cola.

QUESTIONS

1. How surprising is it to you that a basic product like a Coca-Cola beverage would need to be supported by a learning organization?
2. What responsibility should a Coca-Cola truck driver have for being part of a learning organization?

Source: Original story based on facts and observations in the following sources: Loreli Trisca, "8 Learning Organization Examples and How to Create One," *Deel* (www.deel.com), January 31, 2025, p. 4; Christine Motherwell, "Transforming into a Learning Organization," *EP Thought Leader Series* (www.epthoughhtleaders.com), April 9, 2025, p. 1; Tapaswee Chandele, "The Journey to Become a Learning Organization," *SHRM Executive Network* (www.shrm.org), 2024, pp. 1–13; Elissa Tucker, "How Becoming a Learning Organization Delivered Success for Coca-Cola," *APQC* (www.apqc.org), October 14, 2021, pp. 1–3; Doug Teachey and Jay Kuhlman, "How Coca-Cola Leveraged Learning and Development to Power Its Business Transformation: Part Two," *Training Industry* (www.trainingindustry.com), March 27, 2017, pp. 1–3.

Intellectual capital Knowledge that transforms raw materials and makes them more valuable; it is also a capital asset consisting of intellectual material.

Managing knowledge well achieves goals such as innovation, nonduplication of effort, and competitive advantage. When knowledge is managed effectively, information is shared as needed, whether it is printed or stored electronically or in the brains of workers. The justification for knowledge management is that intellectual capital is a resource that allows for survival and competitive advantage. **Intellectual capital** is knowledge that transforms raw materials and makes them more valuable. It is also a capital asset consisting of intellectual material.[37] The intellectual capital of many firms, consisting of the know-how and intelligence of the workers, is far more valuable than their physical assets, consisting mostly of a handful of machines and furniture. Firms high in intellectual capital and low in physical capital include software development companies, consulting firms, and advertising agencies. Knowledge management also helps deal with the problem of knowledge loss when competent employees leave the firm. If the employee's useful knowledge, including creative ideas, is documented by the firm, a knowledgeable employee's departure is a less serious problem.

Knowledge-Management Strategies and Techniques

Given that knowledge management can help an organization succeed, various strategies and techniques have been developed to foster the process. The building blocks of a learning organization are also closely tied in with the knowledge-management strategies and techniques to be described next. Knowledge management remains important despite artificial intelligence and other software that stores and analyzes information. Human thinking provides the input that enables information technology to process data.

Hire the Right Persons

Hiring people who are good at learning and teaching makes a substantial difference in the effectiveness of knowledge management (KM). Thomas H. Davenport explains: "Not enough companies have built into their competency models how well people learn and pass on their knowledge informally on the job. If you've got people who are hungry to learn and people who are good at transferring knowledge, the organization will be much more alive."[38] People with the right stuff for KM are most likely to be those who have demonstrated intelligence, accumulated knowledge, and displayed intellectual curiosity in the past.

Create Knowledge

Creating knowledge is an important first step for managing knowledge. The strategy is easily stated but not so easy to implement. First, you need intelligence to create the knowledge, and you also need the conditions favoring creativity and innovation described in Chapter 5. To understand the need for creating new knowledge, it is useful to perceive every product, service, and work process as a bundle of knowledge. For example, the Jeep Wrangler reflects the knowledge of how to transform an 85-year-old design to fit modern tastes for the retro look, do the appropriate engineering and manufacturing, and market and distribute the product to customers.

A standard approach to creating knowledge is to scan the environment for information that might apply to one's situation. The Internet and paid-for databases have become standard techniques for environmental scanning. Executive scanning is often done to search for information that could affect the future of the firm.[39] In the past, residential real estate developers scanned the environment to help predict what type of structures might be in demand in the future. It became apparent that home ownership would be declining, so developers invested heavily in constructing multifamily dwellings, including apartment buildings. Part of the decline was attributed to predicted substantial increases in the price of single-family houses. Because it can take at least two years from site location to produce a completed apartment complex, environmental scanning is particularly necessary.

Another perspective on knowledge creation is that servant leadership facilitates the process by sharing leadership responsibilities. Because leadership is shared, there is mutual influence and direction, as well as caring relationships. The mutual influence and caring stimulate greater exchange of ideas, experiences, and expertise among servant leaders and group members that results in the generation of new knowledge.[40]

Because the leader and the group members are functioning as partners, they tend to exchange ideas, thereby creating knowledge that did not exist previously. For example, suppose an authoritarian leader says to the sales group, "Increase the customer retention rate by 15 percent by the end of the quarter." A minimum of discussion is likely to take place within the group about why the customer retention rate is low. Instead, imagine the servant leader saying, "Our customer retention rate is far too low. How can we work together to improve our retention rate?"

Ismagilov/Shutterstock

A successful organization creates knowledge.

With this statement and question, discussion and idea sharing leading to new knowledge are more likely to take place.

Close the Gap between Knowing and Doing

Why don't companies accomplish more if they have so much knowledge and expertise? Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert I. Sutton believe that companies have fallen into the knowing–doing gap because doing something requires the hard work of making something happen. Managing knowledge is not enough. The knowledge must be converted into action. It is easier and safer to have intellectual discussions, to gather large databases, and to invest in technical infrastructure than it is to execute. The challenge for companies and the people in them is to build a culture of action.[41] Often this means taking decisive action that results in repeat business, such as an airline having a high percentage of on-time flights or a retailer offering commissions to store associates who sell merchandise.

A big gap between knowing and doing stems from the challenge of AI and analytics. Managers now have access to enormous amounts of complicated data about customers, employees, and operations, but these data do not translate readily into useful knowledge.[42] For example, AI might inform WD-40 management that people who purchase WD-40 and 3-in-One Oil purchase a lot of hand tools and garden tools. Translating this tidbit into profitable action might prove difficult.

Knowledge Management Systems

Many communication technology systems are used to support and implement knowledge management strategies and techniques. Several of them have been mentioned in the section about sharing information. Four representative knowledge management systems are described next.[43]

1. *Internal knowledge bases* are critical components of a comprehensive knowledge management system. The knowledge bases serve as centralized hubs designed to organize and use an organization's proprietary knowledge. Tacit knowledge is transformed into explicit, readily available information. Operational efficiency and decision making are therefore facilitated. (Tacit knowledge is experience based and is not yet codified or written, such as the names of several influential people at a major customer.)
2. *Collaboration management platforms* leverage real-time communication, shared workspaces, and integrated applications to foster knowledge within the organization. Collaboration management platforms frequently incorporate asynchronous and synchronous communication channels such as chat and videoconferencing.
3. *Learning management systems* are specialized management platforms that facilitate the creation, delivering, and tracking content for education and training. The focus of these systems is formalized learning, including classroom instruction about improving workplace safety.
4. *Social management systems* focus on capturing and leveraging the tacit knowledge and expertise residing within employee relationships and daily conversations. Going beyond simply storing documents, these systems encourage social interaction, making communication itself a key knowledge asset. For example, a social management system might store conversational information about how to motivate star performers when promotions and bonuses are scarce.

Methods of Sharing Information

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 5
Specify methods for sharing information within an organization.

A major goal of the learning organization and knowledge management is for organizational members to share relevant information. Sharing can take place in all four organizational directions: downward, laterally, upward, and diagonally. Many of the strategies and techniques already described in this chapter contribute directly or indirectly to information sharing.

Although knowledge management does not appear to be highly complicated, few organizations have figured out how to share knowledge among employees or how to pass it on when one employee transfers or quits.[44] A major problem is that many employees withhold what they know, referred to as knowledge hoarding. Many employees pretend not to know something, promise to share but never do, or tell people they are not permitted to share even if they can. A team of six researchers found that a more cognitively complex job, in which people need to process large amounts of information to process difficult problems, tended to promote more knowledge sharing. Jobs offering more autonomy also resulted in more sharing.[45]

Here we briefly describe seven focused methods for sharing information. You will notice that they overlap somewhat with the knowledge management systems described earlier. Self-Assessment 15-1 provides you with an opportunity to reflect on your own tendencies toward information sharing.

1. *In-house skills directory.* The basic idea of a company skills directory is to compile a directory of the skills, talents, and special knowledge of employees throughout the firm. To be useful, the directory must go far beyond basic information and job experience. The directory should indicate the specialized knowledge of the people listed and their level of expertise. When faced with a problem requiring specialized talent, employees can consult the directory for a person who can help.

2. *Intranet communication systems.* Many firms use intranets and online forums to spread and share knowledge. Workers who need to share information log on to an internal collaboration network to access content posted by another worker within the company. Accessing the site saves the time of sending around numerous emails asking for information, as well as sending text messages or making phone calls.

   An analysis of problem solving conducted in an online discussion forum within a global engineering firm provides some clues as to which problems workers bother with—and therefore share information about. An influential factor was whether the recipient of the message thought the problem involved fit that person's expertise. Reciprocity also had an effect in the sense that the recipient of a request to help solve a problem kept in mind whether the sender had helped him or her in the past. Requests in relation to problems that were too long and too complex tended to receive less attention. Having several competing problems to work on also had a negative influence on information sharing.[46]

3. *Encouraging knowledge sharing in employee networks.* Networks, both those on the computer and face-to-face, are a major mechanism for knowledge sharing. For example, if a person has an extensive network within the organization, the person is likely to receive tidbits of useful, work-related information. One recruiter in the network might say to another in the network, "I came across a small historically Black college in Georgia that is a wonderful source of mechanical engineering candidates. Let me tell you about it."

   A study of 700 employees in an engineering, information technology, and management consultancy demonstrated that both the characteristics of the network and the individual influence the amount of information sharing that takes place. The main finding of the study was that knowledge sharing happens best when having a central position in a network, motivation, and ability are the highest. *Ability* in this context refers to the ability to learn from others as well as to understand how one's knowledge can be used by other workers.[47]

4. *Personal explanations of success factors.* An advanced method of information sharing is for key organizational members to teach others what they know through explanations of success factors. Noel Tichy refers to these stories as the "teachable point of view" because they help leaders become teachers. The teachable point of view is a written explanation of what a person knows and believes about what it takes to succeed in the person's own business, as well as in business in general. About two pages in length, the document focuses on critical success factors, such

SELF-ASSESSMENT 15-1

My Tendencies toward Sharing Knowledge

Directions: Indicate whether each of the following statements is mostly true or mostly false as it applies to your own attitudes and behaviors.

Statement about Knowledge Sharing	Mostly True	Mostly False
1. I am very secretive at work or school.	☐	☐
2. When I get a good idea in relation to work, I will usually describe it to a coworker as soon as possible.	☐	☐
3. I post loads of personal information about myself on social media sites.	☐	☐
4. Only a fool would tell coworkers about a great idea the person had for a new business.	☐	☐
5. I try to make sure I get full credit for any useful new idea I have at work.	☐	☐
6. I am willing to let coworkers know about a good idea I have for improving work efficiency.	☐	☐
7. I think it is important that laws about intellectual property rights be strictly enforced.	☐	☐
8. Only a jerk would describe in great detail an idea that person had for a new product, service, or book.	☐	☐
9. If I thought I had a money-making idea, I would share it with other people in a brainstorming activity for a course such as this one.	☐	☐
10. I think that Coca-Cola is completely justified in keeping its secret receipt for its syrup in a vault.	☐	☐
11. I enjoy working as part of a team and sharing ideas.	☐	☐
12. If a student submits a paper to a professor, I like the idea of indicating that the ideas are copyrighted, such as stating "© Mary Ketchum. All rights reserved."	☐	☐
13. I would be comfortable posting my best ideas for work improvement or a new product on my company's intranet.	☐	☐
14. I worry a lot about a boss stealing my best ideas, even if the boss appears to be honest.	☐	☐
15. I enjoy providing a coworker with new information or teaching the coworker a new skill.	☐	☐

Scoring and Interpretation: Give yourself 1 point for having answered Mostly True to the following statements: 2, 3, 6, 9, 11, 13, and 15. Give yourself 1 point for having answered Mostly False to the following statements: 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, and 14.

12 or higher: You have very positive attitudes toward sharing knowledge with others. However, you might be a little too trusting of people whose intentions you do not know.

5-11: You tend to have about-average attitudes toward information sharing.

0-4: You have negative attitudes toward information sharing, and you may need to become a little more open with your ideas to work well in a team setting.

as: What would it take to knock out the competition? Tichy claims that this hard-hitting method of information sharing is used in hundreds of companies.[48]

5. *Fostering dialogue among organization members.* To promote the importance of information sharing, company leaders should converse about the importance of intellectual capital and the development of core competencies.[49] At the same time, workers throughout the firm should be encouraged to share useful suggestions, tidbits of knowledge, and success stories about problem solving. This type of information sharing can take place face-to-face, but email exchanges also play a vital role. The most consistent observation about knowledge management and information sharing is that the human touch is more important than technology. David Gilmour, the president of a knowledge systems company, advises that technology should not flood people with information or take it from them. It is better to identify connections that are valuable to the people who are being connected.[50]
6. *Evolvable scripts.* A recently developed method to simplify knowledge sharing is an evolvable script. The script is a concise, modular instruction set outlining the purpose of a task, along with the most critical actions to get it done. By focusing only on essential actions, it enables easy comprehension and daily use and permits employee discretion in carrying out the tasks. Apple retail stores face the dual challenge of creating a consistent experience while maintaining high productivity. To meet the challenge, Apple has developed a set of flexible principles for retail employees that describes the features of excellent customer interaction—the APPLE script:
   - **A**pproach customers with a warm smile.
   - **P**robe politely to understand their needs.
   - **P**resent a take-home solution.
   - **L**isten for concerns.
   - **E**nd with an invitation to return.

   This brief evolvable script is easy for Apple store associates to understand and remember.

   At the same time, it allows the associates to adapt to specific and changing customer needs.[51]
7. *Sharing physical facilities and informal learning.* An important method of fostering dialogue is to develop shared physical facilities, as described in Chapter 10 about teamwork development. Considerable information sharing is likely to take place in a snack lounge or company information resource center. At the same time, informal learning takes place, which is almost synonymous with information sharing.

Skill-Development Exercise 15-1 is designed to provide you additional insights about the nature of knowledge sharing.

Implications for Managerial Practice

1. Because the term *organizational culture* is used to label so many different activities and behaviors, it is best for the practicing manager to explain to others what the manager means by the term. Defining organizational culture as "the values and norms that define what is and is not appropriate behavior for employees" or "how we do things here" would help pinpoint what the term really means.
2. To manage organizational culture, one must first understand the culture of the firm and then use that knowledge to guide one's own behavior and that of group members. For example, an executive might resist downsizing to reduce costs because laying off productive and loyal employees conflicts with the firm's values.
3. The most important and the most practical aspect of the learning organization and knowledge management is for workers to share useful information with one another. In your role as a manager, you should therefore make a systematic effort to ensure that information is shared in the total organization or your organizational

SKILL-DEVELOPMENT EXERCISE 15-1

The Knowledge-Sharing Investigation Teams

A challenge with the idea of knowledge sharing is to know what knowledge should be shared among company members. The class is organized into knowledge-sharing investigation teams. Members of each team contact two people working in a support, technical, sales, professional, or managerial position in a profit or nonprofit organization. Ask the contact persons what knowledge would be valuable to share in their place of work. Communicate using the easiest method, whether it be a phone call, a text message, or a tweet.

Discuss your findings in a group, and perhaps add opinions of your own as to what knowledge would be worthwhile sharing in an organization. Arrive at a conclusion about five specific types of knowledge within an organization worth sharing. Share your findings with members of the other groups in the class.

unit. Establish both formal steps (e.g., an intranet) and informal methods (e.g., simply encouraging people to exchange good ideas) to accomplish information sharing.

4. The manager should be clear about the possible dysfunctions of knowledge hoarding, such as less innovation and wasted time duplicating what is already known ("reinventing the wheel").
5. Several theorists have mentioned that a company's true competitive advantage derives from intellectual capital. If this observation is valid, then one of the highest organizational priorities is to recruit and retain knowledgeable and intelligent workers. Even during a downsizing, maximum effort should be invested in retaining the best thinkers and most knowledgeable people in the company.

Summary of Key Points

1. **Describe three aspects of organizational culture: how it is determined, its dimensions, and how it is learned.** The origins of organizational culture often lie in the values, administrative practices, and personality of its founders. Other key influences are the societal culture, the industry, the organization's code of conduct, and the methods to build the culture, such as hiring for cultural fit.

   Organizational culture has various dimensions, such as stories and myths maintained by the organization; the degree of change; intensity of work; collaboration and teamwork; resource allocation and rewards; rights and rituals; a sense of ownership; belief in a higher purpose; information sharing; innovativeness and organizational ambidexterity; organizational justice; orientation toward serving customers; joy and happiness; family friendliness; and inclusiveness of all stakeholders. The culture is taught primarily through socialization and the teaching of leaders, and having a cultural mentor is helpful.

2. **Explain some of the major consequences and implications of organizational culture.** The consequences and implications of organizational culture include competitive advantage and organizational effectiveness; productivity, quality, and employee engagement; creativity and innovation; compatibility of mergers and acquisitions; the person-organization fit; pointing to direction of leadership activity; emotional and physical safety of workers; and organizational health.

3. **Identify the building blocks of a learning organization.** Components of the learning organization include (a) double-loop learning, (b) systems thinking, (c) team learning, (d) personal mastery of the job, (e) translation of new knowledge into new ways of behaving, and (f) learning from other organizations.

4. **Pinpoint strategies and techniques for knowledge management.** Strategies and techniques for knowledge management include (a) hiring the right persons, (b) creating knowledge, and (c) closing the gap between knowing and doing. Knowledge management systems include an internal knowledge base; collaborative management platforms; learning management systems, and social management systems.

5. **Specify methods for sharing information within an organization.** Information sharing is at the heart of a learning organization and knowledge management. Seven specific methods are (a) in-house skills directory; (b) intranet communication systems, (c) encouraging knowledge sharing in employee networks, (d) personal explanations of success factors, (e) fostering dialogue among organizational members, (f) evolvable scripts, and (g) sharing physical facilities and informal learning.

Key Terms and Phrases

Organizational culture, p. 412
Subculture, p. 417
Socialization, p. 417
Learning organization, p. 421
Double-loop learning, p. 422
Knowledge management (KM), p. 423
Intellectual capital, p. 424

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. During the past two and a half decades, the term *corporate culture* has become so widely used that it is almost as well-known as a term such as *return on investment*. What do you think accounts for the popularity of the term *corporate culture*?
2. How would you describe the organizational culture of Walmart (or any other large retailer) based on whatever evidence you have? If necessary, visit your local Walmart (or other large retailer) to make firsthand observations.
3. Why do so many CEOs believe that their primary responsibility is managing organizational culture? What happened to making a profit?
4. Identify any organization you know about that you think would best fit your personality. Justify your reasoning.
5. What relevance does *organizational culture* have for members of the gig economy (essentially, freelance workers)?
6. What do you think of the assertion made by many business observers that corporate culture is more important than a company's strategy in determining its success?
7. How should a manager deal with professional workers who are hesitant to share information because they are concerned that a coworker will steal their best ideas and take credit for them?
8. Give an example of how a first-level manager might engage in systems thinking.
9. Visualize yourself as an associate at an Apple store. How effective would the Apple evolvable script be for you?
10. Ask two experienced managers or corporate professionals what they think is the higher purpose of their employer and whether they care about the purpose.

CASE PROBLEM 15A: Potential Hotel Manager Jasmine Ponders Whether She Would Fit the Culture

Twenty-seven-year-old Jasmine has worked for four years as an assistant hotel manager at a hotel chain. One of her major career goals was to move up to a senior executive position at a major hotel and resort chain. The hotel where she works currently is franchise operated, and several family members work at key positions at the hotel. Jasmine therefore feels that she is an outsider who will not be promoted to hotel manager in the short-term future. She believes that working as a hotel manager is the next step toward becoming a hotel and resort executive.

Based on these considerations, Jasmine elected to conduct a job search, including careful use of the job-search website Indeed. To her delight, her skills and experience were in strong demand in the healthy service economy at the time.

The second company she interviewed for a hotel manager position was a Cleveland location of an international hotel chain, only a twenty-minute commute from where she lives. After a series of phone interviews, video interviews, and face-to-face interviews, Jasmine received an attractive offer at 20 percent higher pay than she was receiving at her current hotel. As is typical in the hotel industry, the manager position required some work at night and on weekends. Jasmine said she was excited about the offer but wanted one week to reach a final decision.

Jasmine thought highly of the job offer and the hotel but believed that she should learn more about the hotel's culture to see if she would be a good fit. She thought, "I should be diligent before taking a big leap." Jasmine's first step in checking out the organizational culture was to ask one of the hotel's receptionists what he thought of the hotel. He responded, "Amazing. Anything else I can help you with?"

Next, Jasmine had lunch at the hotel restaurant. She explained to her server that she was considering working for the hotel in an administrative position, and she wanted the server's input into what it was like working there. The server responded, "Hotel management believes in fair work on your shift to earn fair pay. If you do your job right, you will earn good tips. To keep your job, you have to work well with the other servers and the kitchen staff."

Jasmine also asked the dining room hostess about working conditions at the hotel. The hostess responded, "If you are looking for an easy job, go someplace else. They expect a lot out of you here. There are plenty of other hotels in Cleveland, and there is pressure on you to go out of your way to please customers."

Jasmine then asked ten people in her network if they knew anybody who worked for this prospective employer. She finally identified three people—an accountant, a banquet manager, and a housekeeping supervisor—along with their contact information. When asked about the type of hotel atmosphere, the accountant replied, "Only hard workers survive here. You've got to attain good results to justify your compensation."

The banquet manager said, "If you are serious about running a hotel, you must be totally committed. You face one emergency after another: from a snowstorm that results in cancellations to five employees quitting at the same time. You also must deal with outrageous hotel guests who want a refund for any little inconvenience they have encountered. The housekeeping supervisor said, "Our hotel is a nice place to work, but you earn every dollar you get. My staff and I are expected to keep the rooms spotless and keep guest complaints to an absolute minimum."

Jasmine thought she was learning a lot about the corporate culture, but she wanted one more vital piece of input. Through a couple of people in her network, Jasmine identified a family who had recently stayed at the hotel. When asked about what she thought of the hotel in question, the mother in the family said, "The hotel staff is fine, and the hotel has all the amenities you would expect. My husband, my two children, and I had an enjoyable four-night stay at the hotel. We weren't expecting Disneyland at a downtown Cleveland hotel."

Jasmine concluded, "I have uncovered no skeletons in the closet, and what I hear impresses me. I'm going to phone in my acceptance at 9:00 tomorrow morning."

Case Questions

1. What do you think of Jasmine's approach to sizing up the organizational culture at her prospective employer?
2. What other approach would you recommend that Jasmine could have taken to assess the organizational culture at the hotel?
3. Based on the evidence that Jasmine collected, what is your assessment of the organizational culture at the hotel where she will be working?

Associated Role Play

One student plays the role of Jasmine, who receives a text message from Rick, the regional manager to whom the Cleveland hotel reports. Jasmine recognizes that Rick is expecting her to accept the job offer on the spot, but she still wants to know more about the organizational culture at the hotel and how well she would fit the culture. Another student plays the role of Rick, who thinks that Jasmine is too demanding, but he will give his best explanation of how he thinks Jasmine might fit the culture. Rick wants to hire Jasmine, but Jasmine still wants assurance that there will be a good culture fit between her and the hotel culture.

CASE PROBLEM 15B: The Work-from-Home Culture

Darren is the owner-operator of a produce distribution business, Winning Produce. The company's primary business is to purchase large supplies of fruits and vegetables from farmers, who then ship them to food distribution companies. The distributors then package the produce and sell the packages in bulk such as selling bagged onions to supermarkets and grocery stores. Winning Produce does not handle the products because all transactions are done by phone or online. The farmers and distributors do the shipping and handling. Decisions about purchases from farmers and sales to intermediaries usually must be made quickly, and decisions about the cost and price of the produce have to be accurate. Winning Produce has 45 employees.

Winning Produce has a physical location in a suburban business park. A few months after the pandemic took hold, company employees were asked to work from home if it was not a hardship, such as one of the buyers sharing a small apartment with two roommates. Darren accepted the necessity of all the employees working from home, but he perceived some problems. Coordinating people on a big purchase or sale took more time than before the pandemic. Sometimes a key employee was not available to respond within an hour to a problem during the workday.

When the state government cleared workplaces to fully reopen their offices, Darren informed all employees they had to return to the physical office. An exception was that ten employees whose work did not require considerable coordination with other employees were permitted to work from home two days per week. The remote work option was so popular that Darren extended it for three years. After three years, Darren noticed that difficulties in coordination and quick response time to problems were getting slower.

Darren thought a good approach to resolving the problems with coordination and response time would be to get the opinion of Amanda, the onion and potato specialist. Darren thought Amanda would be a good person to consult because she has a strong interest in workplace behavior. Amanda provided Darren with this input:

"What we are experiencing is a cultural shift at Winning Produce. Even though we are a very small company, we still have a corporate culture. Before the pandemic, we had a culture that valued teamwork. We pulled together to be winners (said with a smile). We all jumped on problems.

"By about six months of working from home, our staff became more laid back. If someone needed to get an oil change during a workday, the person did it. The need to find 300 pounds of onions by tomorrow could wait. You could say that our company developed a work-from-home culture."

Darren said to Amanda, "Thanks for your analysis of our problem. I want to work with you to return to a work-from-the-home-office culture."

Case Questions

1. Does Darren have a problem? Why should workers feel a sense of urgency to buy and sell produce?
2. What dimension or dimensions of organizational culture appeared to have lost strength during the pandemic and the following three years?
3. What do you recommend that Darren and Amanda do to restore the in-office culture at Winning Produce?

Associated Role Play

One student plays the role of Darren, who decides to conduct a virtual interview with Jeff, one of the remote workers he thinks has become too lax about working rapidly. Darren wants to get more insight into whether Jeff feels part of a culture that values rapid coordination with coworkers. Another student plays the role of Jeff, who believes in getting work done on time but also enjoys a work environment that, in his words, "doesn't require me to work like a mad man and gives me a little flexibility." Observers will look to see if Jeff might be willing to buy into the type of culture Darren wants.

Endnotes

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