

Chapter XL

Organizational Culture Profile

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BACKGROUND

The organizational culture profile (OCP) is an instrument initially developed by O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1991) to assess person-organization fit. The tool can be useful as well in assessing organizations in need of culture change, distinguishing subcultures, and evaluating potential fit in mergers and acquisitions.

Person-organization fit is a useful predictor of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which in turn affect performance. The OCP is considered an important instrument to measure the fit between individual's preferences and organizational cultures. Traditional measures of person-situation fit used a limited set of descriptions and situations, thus failing to take into account idiosyncratic differences between individuals and situations, depending on salience and relevance. An additional advantage of the profile is that it allows the assessment of individuals and situations using a common language.

Culture is understood as a system of shared symbols and meanings (Alvesson, 2002). Accord-

ing to Schein's (1984) well-established model, organizational culture is composed of different levels with artifacts and creations at the visible level, values at the next level, and finally, basic underlying assumptions at the core, below the conscious level of culture. The attraction-selection-attrition framework (Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995) posits that organizational members perpetuate an organization's values by virtue of attraction to similar individuals (Newcomb, 1960), selection of similar recruits, and departure of ill-fitted individuals. As person-organization fit is a useful predictor of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, the congruency between the values of the individual and the organization may be particularly relevant to organizations.

The OCP contains 54 value statements (see appendix) that are to be sorted by the participants and reflect the following seven factors: (1) innovation; (2) stability; (3) people orientation; (4) outcome orientation; (5) easygoing; (6) detail orientation; (7) team orientation. First, a representative sample of organizational members are requested to complete the instrument by sorting

the value statements into nine categories according to how characteristic they find them to the firm. Adkins and Caldwell (2004) used a sample of 52, but others have used as few as 14 individuals (Sheridan, 1992). Once the organizational profile information is so gathered, individual members can take the survey in order to measure their fit with the organization. The same instrument measures fit, only this time by sorting the items according to desirability of the item.

In both cases, following the Q-sort approach (Block, 1961), respondents are asked to categorize the statements and to assign a specified number of statements to each category (most characteristic/desirable = 2 statements, quite = 4 statements, fairly = 6 statements, somewhat = 9 statements, neither characteristic/desirable = 12 statements, somewhat uncharacteristic/undesirable = 9 statements, fairly = 6 statements, quite = 4 statements, most = 2 statements). O'Reilly et al. (1991) used the following instructions for the organizational measure: "Important values may be expressed in the form of norms or shared expectations about what's important, how to behave or what attitudes are appropriate. Please sort the 54 values into a row of nine categories, placing at the one end of the row those [items] that you consider to be the most characteristic aspects of the culture of your organization, and at the other hand those [items] that you believe to be the least characteristic ..." (p. 495) and the following for the individual fit instrument "How important is it for this characteristic to be a part of the organization you work for?" (p.496). The instrument takes 20-30 minutes to complete.

RELIABILITY

Research supports that the OCP is internally consistent and reliable. Adkins and Caldwell (2004) report coefficient alpha scores between .85 and .96 for 5 different profiles. Sheridan (1992) used

as few as 14 to 19 members per organization, and observed .23 as the median interclass correlation for OCP dimensions, which is low but not inconsistent with other measures used in climate research.

VALIDITY

The literature (Adkins & Caldwell, 2004; O'Reilly et al., 1991) suggests that the measure of person-organization fit has not only discriminant validity, but also substantial predictive validity, and is therefore useful to organizations.

RESULTS

In order to establish the organizational culture profile for the organization surveyed, item-by-item averages of scores (most characteristic = 9, least characteristic = 1) are calculated to obtain the overall profile. Then the individual responses are correlated with this organizational profile to measure person-organization fit. For a sample of 136 respondents, observed correlations ranged from -.52 to .48 (Adkins & Caldwell, 2004). Person-organization fit scores can be compared across individuals in order to assess which individual's desired culture is more congruent with the organizational culture in place.

COMMENTARY

The organizational culture profile is a multi-purpose instrument that can be used to evaluate the culture of the organization as a whole, for example, as a diagnostic instrument before a change intervention. It can be useful to compare subcultures within the same organization (Adkins & Caldwell, 2004), or to evaluate culture fit prior to a merger. Person-organization fit determination can be useful for applicant selection or evalua-

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