



## Understanding and Managing Organizational Culture in the Workplace

### What is organizational culture?

To answer this question, we should first discuss the definition of culture itself since any organizational culture is largely dependent upon the wider culture that contains the organization.

With respect to “culture” in general, we might say that a culture embodies the beliefs and behaviors that characterize a particular group, where “group” can be social, ethnic or even age-based.

So organizational culture would refer to that “essence” in a company that embodies the nature of the particular company—that essence that defines or embodies those beliefs and behaviors of the employees of the organization.

For example, if the founder/owner of a privately-owned company tends to micromanage his business in a dictatorial fashion, and many of his extended family members work in all aspects of the business, then that organizational culture will likely be quite different than what might be found in a large, multi-national corporation where multiple layers of management exist, and managerial control is much more decentralized.

### Questions to Ask:

- Is the organizational culture in your company one that has been proactively endorsed and promoted or is it one that has developed/evolved on its own?
- What are the basic features of your company culture?
- Is the culture positive in general or negative?
- What formal structures exist to openly recognize and/or reward employees who go above and beyond the requirements of the job?
- Are there any key individuals who have significantly influenced your company culture and how did they do it?
- Are you familiar with formal procedures to shape and transform your company culture?
- Do you believe that company culture is something that should be tampered with and influenced, or do you believe it should be allowed to develop on its own?

- Do you have an employee suggestion program, and if so, is there a positive incentive to participate in developing innovative ideas to benefit the bottom line?
- Is there a feedback program that allows employees to effectively provide feedback about their disapproval with anything in the workplace?
- Does management proactively work to maintain a high level of quality in the culture or to improve the culture in any way?

You can distribute an employee feedback form to identify potential issues in the organizational culture. It can be used as-is or modified to meet the particular needs of any work environment. Once problems are identified, managers can take a proactive approach to alleviate the problems.