

Change by Cherry Picking Cultural Elements that Work

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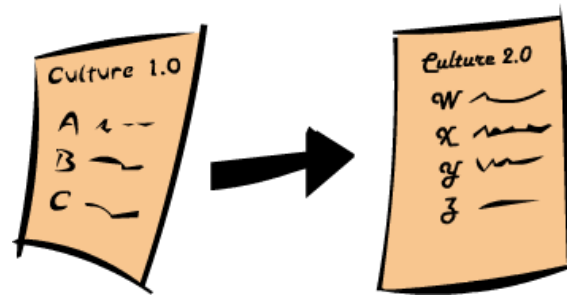
In the case “Organizational Transformation in a Taiwanese Company” Eva Chen, the agent of change, has a huge task ahead of her to transform YUAN Group’s culture into one that makes it a serious global competitor. From the case one can deduce that the YUAN Group is an organization in its midlife that embodies the personality of Mr. Pan, YUAN Group’s CEO. Mr. Pan’s personality is that of a “father figure” that “cares for his employees very much”. YUAN Group’s culture focuses on human interaction and compassion amongst employees. For example, management was always present at employee’s functions and employees would mingle in

the company’s annual outing.

The case talks about all the changes that were enforced, but does not give us a clear insight into the employees’ reaction; except in one situation: Human Resources (HR) staff reaction. I believe that the HR staff’s reaction to the latest change is representative to that of the rest of the company’s departments. The HR department staff feels that the “workload was too heavy, and with the short amount of time given to finish so many projects, there was always stress and pressure.” At first glance, one could just recommend increasing the HR staff size to accommodate the extra workload. Though, would this really solve the problem, or is this suggestion a typical case of “throwing money at the problem” without addressing the core issue?

Never Start with the Idea of Changing Culture

There is no doubt that YUAN Group has to be more competitive in the global



market, but we have to keep in mind that it is not a brand new conglomerate that can quickly embrace a new culture. In other words, Eva Chen cannot superimpose an external culture onto YUAN Group and expect things to work. Instead she should see whether the existing culture aids or hinders YUAN Group attempt to be more competitive in the global market.

Compassion is one of YUAN Group’s most prominent cultural elements that can aid in the group’s attempt to be more globally competitive. For example, there was more of Mr. Pan’s compassion when Felix was running the HR department. Eva would have a monthly review of the status of each project “to make sure the staff were on schedule,” while Felix “would follow up with staff more to see how things were going.” This human element is a source of strength that must have

played a big part in YUAN Group's success. After all, the group has been around for over 50 years. Eva should capitalize on this strong cultural element and not eliminate it. Showing compassion will certainly increase worker's moral and productivity.

You Cannot Use a Survey to Assess Culture

Eva's employee survey to study employee attitudes

and organizational culture goes against Edgar Schein recommendation in "Cultural Realities for the Serious Culture Leader." Edgar Schein believes that "the best way to assess it (culture) is to bring groups together, to talk about their organization in a structured way that leads them to tactics assumptions." In other words instead of the change being imposed from top to bottom, it should come from within and flow from the bottom up. The HR

staff is not hindering change instead they do seem committed as shown by the amount of time spent working: "often they work until eight, nine or 10 in the evening". While Eva did give its staff the capability to define their role she did not create a conducive environment in which the staff was able to translate these definitions into tactics to ultimately aid the group's long-term goal of becoming more competitive in the global market.

Bibliography

1. Organizational Transformation in a Taiwanese Company. Ivey 9A99C035 (2002)
2. Schein, Edgar (1999) "Cultural Realities for the Serious Cultural Leader." Chapter 9 in *The Corporate Culture Survival Guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass