

# **New Synergist Insights**

## *Organizational Culture (part I)*

April 2015

In last months Insights I discussed the concepts surrounding Resistance to Change in organizations. In this issue I will discuss Organizational Culture. The culture of an organization will largely determine the response to a crisis or changes directed by leadership.

As mentioned in last month's New Synergist Insights, organizational culture is comprised of the shared assumptions and values of the organizations employees. Unfortunately, organizational culture is not well understood in most organizations and this lack of understanding leads to a multitude of poor decisions. First and foremost, organizational culture is created and supported by leaders and their actions.

There are three elements of organizational culture:

- Artifacts – technology, art, and patterns of behavior
- Values – the sense of the way things “should be”
- Basic Assumptions – unconscious assumptions regarding solution(s) to problems

Artifacts are the most visible element organizational culture. Bulletin boards, training materials, the hiring process, employee areas and workspaces, company policies, etc. These artifacts will tell you a lot about the culture of any organization. Do the visible artifacts match the companies “official” statements concerning quality, diversity, innovation, and how they value employees and customers?

Values are less visible than artifacts, but they can help you understand a companies culture if you know what to look for. How do employees interact with each other and how do leaders interact with subordinates? Do organizational members seem to be enthusiastic, intense, or impatient? How much does the organization rely on committees, meetings, etc. to make decisions? The answers to these and other questions will allow you to understand an organization's values.

Basic Assumptions are the least visible of the elements that make up organizational culture. Assumptions include the way organizational members feel about each other, customers, and other stakeholders. For instance, do they truly listen to each other and is there good communication between departments? Do subordinates assume that guidance from leaders should not be questioned? How do employees and leaders feel about risk taking?

The culture of an organization can play a significant role the success of an organization. I will discuss some of the reasons that understanding Organizational Culture is so important in the May issue of New Synergist Insights.

Questions?

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May New Synergist Insights:  
Organizational Culture (part II)