

Ewelina Pietrzak
Politechnika Łódzka
e-mail: ewelinapietrzak@onet.eu

Nurturing organizational behaviour in multicultural companies¹

Pielęgnowanie zachowań organizacyjnych w firmach wielokulturowych

https://doi.org/10.25312/2391-5145.16/2021_12ep

Introduction

Organizations have started to treat their employees as a source of competitive advantage on the market. They have recognised various problems that management and employees can encounter and have started to work on the solutions that can benefit both the company and employees. Managing cultural differences in corporations can be challenging. As easy as it may seem, acknowledging multicultural differences in the company so that the employees feel valued and have more will power to take up on new challenging tasks is a demanding and complex task.

¹ Part of bachelor thesis submitted in Institute of Social Sciences and Management of Technologies on Faculty of Management and Production Engineering on Technical University of Lodz under supervision of Assoc. Prof. Edyta Pietrzak PhD, DA.

Main definitions and theoretical notions

Accordingly, to Robbins² an organization is a group of people who work together in an organized and continued way for a shared purpose. It means realising the mission and vision of the company and coming towards shared goals. Organizations are not only places where the strategies of management are fulfilled but they are places where the employees can accomplish their own goals and obtain strategic skills for their future development. Organizational Behaviour³ studies the impact that a company's structure and staff have on behaviour within the organization. Knowledge that is being acquired through those studies helps organizations in achieving productivity and effectiveness whilst keeping the morale within company at the highest level possible. Sustaining morale can be accomplished through increasing knowledge on motivational factors, handling conflicts and negotiations, leadership behaviour and the effective use of power⁴.

Each organization has its own organizational culture⁵. It is not strictly reflected in procedures or an organization's policy, but it can be seen throughout the everyday work of the employees. Organizational culture can be defined as a shared sense held employees and distinguishes one company from another⁶. It reveals itself when employees with different backgrounds and beliefs share the united vision of a company.

If a company wants to succeed in its environment and appear beneficial for its customers, it needs to have clear mission and vision statements. The mission statement is a main guide for decision making processes, it corresponds strictly with the leading goal of the company, whilst the vision ensures a long-term strategy for achieving goals⁷. A vision statement should not be focused on its originality but on how well it serves the interests of important parties – clients, shareholders and employees. A vision statement can be easily translated into a realistic competitive strategy⁸.

Competitive advantage allows an organization to grow and produce services or goods in a superior way to those of the competition. Its advantages are connected to many different factors among which are intellectual property and skilled and motivated staff. Competitive advantage strongly relies on the company structure and strong management and leadership.

A Multicultural environment consists of skilled employees that have different cultural backgrounds, beliefs and race etc. Culturally diverse teams are beneficial for tasks that require a variety of views. As members have different backgrounds, they bring their own point of view to the table thus work or a task becomes more creative⁹.

² P.S. Robbins, A.T. Judge, *Organizational Behaviour*, Pearson, 2017, 17th Edition, p. 49.

³ Ibidem, p. 51.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 53.

⁵ A. Khan, L. Shabbir, F. Shahzad, *Impact of organizational culture on organizational performance: An overview*, "Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business" 2012, Vol. 3, No. 9, pp. 975–985.

⁶ P.S. Robbins, A.T. Judge, op. cit., p. 565.

⁷ Ibidem, p. 431.

⁸ P.J. Kotter, *What Leaders Really Do*, "Breakthrough Leadership – Best of Harvard Business Review", December 2001, p. 87.

⁹ P.S. Robbins, A.T. Judge, op. cit., p. 362.

The structure within the company should be organized and broadly known to its members. Leader and managers should work together towards the mission and vision of the company and their activities should be complementary. Management without leadership results in uninspired and bland way of working throughout the organization whilst leadership without management encourages disconnected and unorganized style of activity¹⁰.

Description of chosen methodology and stated research questions

To obtain scientifically validated information and answers to the stated research questions various methods have been used. Among the research questions there were 5 that were crucial to understanding the researched topic: 1) What does “organizational behaviour” mean and how to enhance it in multicultural organizations? 2) Multicultural diversity: what is it and how does it affect the workplace? 3) What is organizational culture is and how can it be developed? 4) What are main problems in leading multicultural teams? 5) How can leadership initiatives enhance the acceptance of cultural diversity at the organization?

The author has studied theory on leadership, psychology, and anthropology to possess knowledge on crucial notions and definitions in those areas. To acquire first-hand information on the daily activities in international organizations an empirical method has been used. Non-standardized narrative interviews with managers and directors of various companies were conducted. Empirical methods seek to test assumptions through experience that can be drawn in the realistic way. Understanding the reality is obtained through induction¹¹. The author has chosen large international companies and corporations that operate in various countries and can be characterised as multicultural work environments where each team consists of various nationalities and cultures. The companies are operating in various fields such as the food industry, pharmaceutical industry, materials industry along with space and defence industry.

Conclusions

After conducting interviews with employees of various international companies it can be concluded that the goal of achieving productivity and effectiveness in the organization is one of the main aspects, among many, that managers and employees are focused on. All of the interviewees emphasize the importance of motivation and communication in the workplace. For them, it is important not to just manage the team but to lead it and motivate it so that their employees can achieve their own goals. When the team is motivated and feels valued it is more likely that it will strive for perfection at their daily tasks but will also present behaviour congruent with the organization’s goals.

¹⁰ J. Gosling, H. Mintzberg, *The Five Minds of a Manager*, “Harvard Business Review”, November 2003, pp. 54–63.

¹¹ P.S. Robbins, A.T. Judge, op. cit., p. 18.

For the interviewees multicultural diversity comes with its advantages and disadvantages but nevertheless it sums up to a big gain for a workplace. Interviewees are fond of the multicultural settings at their companies, and they agree that the input to the discussions in diverse teams is much more creative than in homogenous teams. To nurture the organizational culture supervisors must make certain that hired workers fit in and recognize themselves within the set culture but they also should penalize workers who oppose it. Such culture can be protected by a variety of material symbols that emphasize desired behaviours as well as by practices that reinforce key values of the company on a daily basis.

While leading a multicultural team, a leader can encounter a variety of challenges connected to cultural diversity, such as: stereotyping, numerous forms of discrimination like exclusion or incivility¹². To prevent falling into one of the traps, supervisors should familiarize themselves with anti-discrimination policies and codes of conduct that are established throughout the company. Those documents guarantee impartiality throughout employing and firing of the employees, but as well during promotions. It is vital to assess and challenge misleading beliefs to improve objectivity in judgment¹³.

Many companies have an induction day or an induction week. It is a specially designated time when newcomers learn about the company, its values and priorities and they go out with colleagues after hours to socialize outside the workplace. As for day-to-day operations, leaders try to engage in informal conversation with their subordinates to learn about their hobbies, interests, and views. During the ‘walkovers’ supervisors try to motivate the team with short speeches and appraisals, as it has been proven to work better than critical feedback out of the blue. For interviewed leaders it is important to acknowledge various holidays that each employee is celebrating so that free days can be distributed in a fair manner. Not only national holidays are taken into account but also all the special occasions and national celebrations from other cultures that occur to be in a team. It can be concluded that acknowledgment of cultural differences within organization impacts employees’ loyalty and devotion. This results in gaining a competitive advantage on the market.

References

- DuBrin A.J., *Leadership – Research Findings, Practice and Skills*, Cengage Learning, 2016.
- Gosling J., Mintzberg H., *The Five Minds of a Manager*, “Harvard Business Review”, November 2003, pp. 54–63.
- Harvard Business Review Manager’s Handbook. The 17 Skills Leaders Need To Stand Out*, Harvard Business Review Press, 2017.
- Khan A., Shabbir L., Shahzad F., *Impact of organizational culture on organizational performance: An overview*, “Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business” 2012, Vol. 3, No. 9, pp. 975–985.
- Kotter P.J., *What Leaders Really Do*, “Breakthrough Leadership – Best of Harvard Business Review”, December 2001, pp. 85–96.

¹² P. S. Robbins, A. T. Judge, op. cit., p. 96.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 101.