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Organizational Culture

We are living in world dominated by culture. Culture affects everything we do. In this paper, we will define culture, point out some of the artifacts that we have, the values, and the assumptions we hold about culture. We will also look at strong culture perspective, fit perspective and adaptive perspective of culture. Besides, we will also consider the five most important elements in managing culture: What leaders pay attention to, how leaders react to crises, how leaders behave, how leaders allocate rewards and how leaders hire and fire individuals. And finally, we will come up with a plan on how we can change the culture of our institution, notably: our local church.

Culture, I believe, is the atmosphere in which an organization operates, the predominant attitude, the collection of vehiculated messages, verbal and nonverbal.

Swidler (1986) describes culture as a figurative vehicle of meaning, including beliefs, ritual practices, art forms and ceremonies, as well as informal cultural practices such as language, gossip, stories and rituals of daily life.

Correspondingly, Bolman and Deal (1991) point out that establishments are cultures that are driven more by rituals, ceremonies, stories, heroes and myths than by rules, policies and managerial authority. The symbolic frame seeks to understand and irradiate the basic issues of meaning and faith that make symbol so controlling in every aspect of the human experience, including life in organizations and religious orders.

Thus, we turn now to some artifacts we have in our culture. Schein (1992) categorizes three levels of culture. They are artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions.

The artifacts are visible organizational structures and processes. The artifacts, also, in our organization, include the games, the medias, and music. They are symbols that one cannot take for granted. They are admired, well-regarded and highly revered. For example, the logo of our church. It reflects the core values that Seventh-day Adventists are committed to. The underpinning is the Bible, the Word of God, shown open since its message must certainly be read and put into practice. Fundamental to that Biblical message is the Cross, and is also vital in the logo. Above the Cross and the open Bible is the burning flame of the Holy Spirit, the messenger of Truth. In this artifact, the logo, we find a very simple picture of the foundation of Adventist beliefs and values. Additionally, we have food, language, and dress style.

The espoused values are strategies, goals, and philosophies. Organizational values are acceptable or expected norms or limits of behavior for the individual members of the organization. Without the espoused values, the members will, by evasion, follow their individual value systems. Some of the espoused values include the **way we dress**, act, and interact. Also, we have values as Integrity, Boldness, Honesty, Trust, Accountability, Commitment to God, Passion, Fun, love, prayer, family.

Moreover, we have the basic assumptions. They are the unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. We are all the same is the basic assumptions.

For church culture, there are three levels of organizational culture: the observable, the conscious, and the taken for granted (Schein, 2004).

Cameron and Quinn (2006) argue that cultures, as well as people, are functioning in agreement with renowned and widely accepted categorical schemes such as archetypes of values that shape the way people think, process pertinent information and make individual priorities. Furthermore, cultures, as well as people, are designed like archetypes and have correspondingly opposite and contradictory values. This viewpoint is very helpful in trying to see the culture of church as the amalgamation of contradictory yet coexisting value systems, namely spirituality and administration.

**Strong Culture Perspective**:

We have a strong culture perspective, I believe, when members share common behavioral norms, values, expectations and beliefs. Organizational culture refers to the beliefs, ideologies, principles and values that the individuals of an organization share. When members, or employees agree on the core value of the organization and decide to act, perform, and live out what is expected of them, we can say we have a strong culture perspective. When culture is defined as a system of shared meaning, it can be expected that individuals with different backgrounds or at different levels in the organization will tend to describe the organization's culture in similar terms (Robbins and Sanghi, 2007).

**Fit Perspective**

There is fit perspective when compatibility exist between members and their organizations. Compatibility can result from one party supplying a need of the other party, similar values across parties, or both. The fit perspective of culture argues that a culture is good only if it fits the industries or the firm's strategy.

**An adaptive perspective**

If someone has an adaptive perspective, it basically means that they change their point of view of something to adapt, to adjust, or to become accustom with the milieu depending on who they are.

When a culture is repetitively receiving environmental pressures that require continuous adaptation, this will cause an inherent attribute of change, which has been called adaptive culture. A culture that does not support appreciation and response to environmental changes may impede an organization’s ability to adjust to those changes, eventually leading to failure or death (Abebe et al. 2011; Levinson 1994).

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If one were to refer to Southeastern conference of the Seventh-day Adventists church, my place of work, it could be said that an adaptive culture with core values prevails in our churches. Most administrators and Pastors do care about the members, their family and the way they are living outside of the church itself. Those who are part of this category show that they are not selfish or egotistical. This to say that they don’t care only about themselves, their work group, or what concern them. They reject the attitude of behaving somewhat insularly, politically, bureaucratically, or rigidly.

**What Leaders Pay Attention To**

I used to pay attention to trivial, inconsequential matters. But now, realizing that the members usually get their information about the imports, the principles, the opinions, the values of leaders, I pay attention to what is significant. In other words, I look at what weighty and substantial matters. Things that are in congruence with the mission and the vision of the organization. For example, I pay more attention to the well being of my members, not just only spiritually but also substantially. How my members live outside the church? Where they work? What are they dealing with? What are their concerns? In other way to put it, I bring the church to them. We should never forget about one question that we are certain Jesus will definitely ask us: What have you done for the least of these? Thus, I pay attention now more to the lease ones, the unfortunates one. As leaders, we should never forget what the bible says: **“**[Pure](https://biblehub.com/greek/2513.htm) [and](https://biblehub.com/greek/2532.htm) [undefiled](https://biblehub.com/greek/283.htm) [religion](https://biblehub.com/greek/2356.htm) [before](https://biblehub.com/greek/3844.htm) [our](https://biblehub.com/greek/3588.htm) [God](https://biblehub.com/greek/2316.htm) [and](https://biblehub.com/greek/2532.htm) [Father](https://biblehub.com/greek/3962.htm) [is](https://biblehub.com/greek/1510.htm) [this:](https://biblehub.com/greek/3778.htm) [to care for orphans and widows in](https://biblehub.com/greek/1980.htm) [their](https://biblehub.com/greek/846.htm) [distress,](https://biblehub.com/greek/2347.htm) [and to keep](https://biblehub.com/greek/5083.htm) [oneself](https://biblehub.com/greek/1438.htm) [from being polluted](https://biblehub.com/greek/784.htm) [by](https://biblehub.com/greek/575.htm) [the](https://biblehub.com/greek/3588.htm) [world](https://biblehub.com/greek/2889.htm)” (James 1:27).

**How Leaders React to Crises**

Crises can be devastating. It can shake you the core of your being. Leaders, I always believed should be strong, and optimistic. I used to somehow too concern about dealing with the crises. But I come to the realization that in times of crisis we have an opportunity to demonstrate who we really are and what we really stand for and as leader people would pay close attention to us in time like this. They will follow closely your guidance. Consequently, instead of being too worry, I would try to generate an atmosphere of confidence and trust, letting everyone to realize that they should never loose faith in the One who has called of us from darkness to His marvelous light. As long as Jesus is in the boat, it is unsinkable. Therefore, in the mist of crisis the great Captain of our souls is leading. I act now to show in the face crises that our Great God can make a way where there is no way. Our tests can and will become our testimonies.

**How Leaders Behave**

As leader, I believe and practice integrity. The bible says that “The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity” (Proverbs 11:3). If a Pastor wants his or her ministry to be effective, he or she must have integrity. The word can be defined as the firm adherence to a code of moral values. A Christian leader preserves lives, not destroy them or self-destroy. When one has integrity, it will be seen in sincerity, truth, pure heart, single eye, honesty, genuineness. Integrity, indeed, is fundamental to true character.

The members are watching and tend to emulate the leader’s conduct, actions and deeds, and demeanor. Thus, I always behave in a way that is compatible with the organization’s values, standards, principles, as well as its culture. I always believe that we are is more important than what we say and that our heavenly father is constantly watching. Jesus has said something that all leaders should never forget:  “ [If](https://biblehub.com/greek/302.htm) [anyone](https://biblehub.com/greek/3739.htm) [causes](https://biblehub.com/greek/4624.htm) [one](https://biblehub.com/greek/1520.htm) [of these](https://biblehub.com/greek/3778.htm) [little ones](https://biblehub.com/greek/3398.htm) [who](https://biblehub.com/greek/3588.htm) [believe](https://biblehub.com/greek/4100.htm) [in](https://biblehub.com/greek/1519.htm) [Me to stumble,](https://biblehub.com/greek/1473.htm) [it would be better](https://biblehub.com/greek/4851.htm) [for him](https://biblehub.com/greek/846.htm) [to have](https://biblehub.com/greek/2443.htm) [a large](https://biblehub.com/greek/3684.htm) [millstone](https://biblehub.com/greek/3458.htm) [hung](https://biblehub.com/greek/2910.htm) [around](https://biblehub.com/greek/4012.htm) [his](https://biblehub.com/greek/846.htm) [neck](https://biblehub.com/greek/5137.htm) [and](https://biblehub.com/greek/2532.htm) [to be drowned](https://biblehub.com/greek/2670.htm) [in](https://biblehub.com/greek/1722.htm) [the](https://biblehub.com/greek/3588.htm) [depths](https://biblehub.com/greek/3989.htm) [of the](https://biblehub.com/greek/3588.htm) [sea](https://biblehub.com/greek/2281.htm)” (Math 18:6). Additionally, as leader, we ought to behave well for often members look to us for indications of appropriate behavior.

**How Leaders Allocate Rewards**

Dealing with church members, I used to allocate rewards based on performance. If someone was a hard worker and try to make sure a church department functions well for the year, this officer and her staff would get rewarded. But now, I have made a slight modification. I tend to allocate rewards based not only on performance, but also based on behavior that is unswerving and compatible with the church’s values, mission and vision. And what I come to realize is that people would have a higher view for values and what we stand for. They would have more reverence and cherish our espoused standards, ethics, and principles. And we neglect to allocate rewards accordingly, a sense of disbelief prevails and can be discouraging. And that can also create an atmosphere of false commitment.

**How Leaders Hire and Fire Individuals**

In a local church setting, I used to think that we can hire any Christian for any job we may have, such for custodial of for music department. But now, I have come to the realization that new employees ought to share our value systems. If they do, that would feel more comfortable to be part of our organization and they would be in a position to underpin the prevailing culture. Moreover, firing should not be done if it is not in harmony with our espouse value or our organization’s culture.

**Plan of how you can change the culture of your institution**

In this video, **on TED Talks,** Danoesastro (2018) talks about what he thinks is the most important change that is needed today in the work place. He states that the world is getting faster and more multifaceted today. Consequently, he believes that we need a new way of working. He says that we need a way that creates alignment around purpose and one which empowers people to make decision faster. But, he advances, in order to get there, what are we willing to give up? He points out that the most difficult things to change is our own behavior. He clearly shows that in organizational settings, new behaviors are required. And with these new behaviors, one has to give up something. Thus, leaders have to make sure everyone in the organization is to align around the organization’s purpose. He calls for a new culture with less hierarchy.

The video is great and eye opening. But how can I change the culture of my own institution, the culture of the local church so that we can be more productive and prolific.

According to Ashford (2015), Culture is anything that humans generate when they interact with each other and with God’s creation. He continues by saying that when we interact with each other and with God’s creation, we plow the ground (grain, vegetables, livestock), produce artifacts (clothes, housing, cars), build institutions (governments, businesses, schools), form worldviews (theism, pantheism, atheism), and participate in religions (Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Atheism). We produce culture, and at the same time our cultural context shapes us, affecting who we are, what we think and do, and how we feel.

So, the concept of culture is very broad, encompassing in one way or another the totality of our life in this world. There is no doubt, we are working in multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic, and dually gendered environments. Effective leadership in the twenty-first century requires an awareness, and even the competency to lead across the sub and co-cul­tures within our territories. But how can we change the culture of our institution to make it more productive and enjoyable?

I would propose the following three suggested actions to be taken in order to change the culture of our institution, the local church, which can help create a positive diversity climate.

1. **Create an educative atmosphere**. I believe that most of the time people act indifferently, uncaringly, and unresponsively because of lack of knowledge. Education helps followers understand each other in new way that they would have never thought. But most importantly, as Christians, we have to emulate our savior in everything. We have to constantly ask ourselves: What would Jesus do? What would He say? How would he react? I believe a comprehensive educative program of training would change the culture of our institution. Everyone ought to remember that the kingdom of God promotes very specific values, such as loyalty to God over every human regulation (Acts 5:29), denial of self (Matthew 16:24, 25), self-abnegation (Galatians 2:20), sacrificial service to others (Matthew 20:26–28), collective good over individual expression (1 Cor­inthians 14:1–5), mutual cooperation over competition (1 Corinthians 3:1–9), preference for others over self-elevation (Philippians 2:3), esteem for the socially marginalized (Matthew 25:40, 45), and a host of other val­ues.

The servant of the Lord, Sr White (1966) uttered these words, “The walls of sectarianism and caste and race will fall down when the true missionary spirit enters the hearts of men. Prejudice is melted away by the love of God.” And now, the question of Danoesastro on TED TALK remains: What are willing to give up?

1. In addition to creating an educative atmosphere, **a mentoringprogram across gender, racial, and cultural lines** would be established. As leaders, the gift of our mentoring can be a great assess in changing the mentality that pervades our institution. Sometimes, changes can be costly. But we train to what we value. We value evangelism; thus, we put time, money, and personnel resources in this area. We value stewardship; thus we pay persons to promote stewardship. In short, what we value we pay for; what we pay for, we value. If we value diversity and if we are to change the culture of our institution, investment in personnel and monetary resources should be set aside to this end.

White (1886) has this to say “There is no person, no nation that is perfect in every habit and thought. One must learn of another. Therefore, God wants the different nationalities to mingle together, to be one in judgment, one in purpose. Then the union that there is in Christ will be exempli­fied.”

1. And finally, in order for one to effectively change the culture of the institution, **diversify leadership committees are called for**. When we have people that just look like us and talk like us and behave just like us in leadership, and the remining is varied, productivity is hindered. Homogenous committees are not broad, rich, or deep enough to maximize our service effectiveness. Progress can not occur without change. Change is the price we pay for progress. What are we willing to give up?

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