

# THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN THE PROCESS OF INCREASING BUSINESS COMPETENCIES OF AN ORGANIZATION

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The economy crisis on a global level has pointed out the need for the creation of an optimal organization with the appropriate organizational culture which will fully implement the potentials of human resources while creating new values. The new values creation process has its revenues and expenditures. Any optimal organization strives to increase revenues through cost management. The expenditure which arises from work related injuries comprises 4 percent of world GDP. Thus, it is necessary to create an environment which will decrease the number of work related injuries by combining values of the organizational culture and by appropriate attitude towards human resources. Organizational culture groups all business operations into a whole, whereas human resources enable a more effective usage of material and non-material resources. By surveying the available literature, we can notice that there is a relatively small number of papers which deal with the role of human resources in the process of defining the organizational culture which will have an effect on the increase of the organizational competencies. The aim of this paper is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the national and international literature with the aim of defining the role of human capital which will, due to the appropriate organizational culture, contribute to lowering the number of work related injuries and consequently to lowering the costs and increasing organizational competencies. The initial hypothesis is the view that human capital, through appropriate organizational culture, contributes to decreasing the number and the severity of work related injuries, thus lowering the costs and increasing the organizational competencies. In this paper we will try to indicate the need for educating those who deal with human resources and the need for their better understanding of the role and importance of organizational culture in the process of decreasing the number and severity of work related injuries and that is the scientific contribution of this paper.*

**Keywords:** *human resources, organizational culture, safety culture, work safety*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

In times of rapid changes which have become the primary characteristic of the majority of national economies, it is more and more difficult to follow the pace and intensity of those changes. Factors, which induce such a surrounding, are numerous. Some of them are internal, while some factors are external. Every organization has, to a greater or lesser extent, appropriate resources which are used for managing internal changes. Internal factors are numerous and they include: internal organization, division of work, motivation, employees' education etc. All the aforementioned factors generate certain pre-requirements for initiating changes. The main question is if there is a clear vision and understanding of the significance of the internal changes and of the need to manage those changes. Without clear management

of those changes, and without generating environment in which the management anticipates the changes and acts proactively, creation and development of a successful organization on a long-term basis can hardly be expected.

On the other hand, managing external factors which characterize the environment in which each organization operates is a complicated activity and the majority of organizations is incapable of affecting these factors greatly. These factors depend on the macroeconomic indicators which characterize any national economy (GDP growth rate, foreign trade deficit, the implementation of certain agreements and rules on an international level etc.). It is evident that these factors as well cause some changes and introduce new game rules. Due to this, any organization has to try to recognize the direction of the future activities and changes in order to replace its business plans and adjust them with the trends in the domestic and foreign market.

Recognising the instigators of internal and external changes is an indicator of the significant role of the management in any organisation. The creation of leaders who are capable of recognising the changes is the only way to create business environment in which an organisation will use all its resources for instigating changes and for adapting to the changes that have already occurred. This process is extremely delicate and it requires that an organisation thinks globally and works locally on a micro level at the same time. It also requires that the values of the global changes are gradually implemented into internal strategies. All this points out the role and significance of human resources in the process of active adaptation to all the changes in the environment. In times of globalisation and market openness, there is less and less unfamiliarity in the business environment within which an organisation creates new values. Because of this it is more difficult to gain some comparative advantages which create pre-requirements for revenue growth. In such a surrounding, more and more organisations turn to internal activities and cost reductions as a way of increasing the business competences of an organisation. It is clear that there are fixed and variable expanses in any organisation. It is more difficult to influence fixed expanses as they are mostly connected with the level of the activities in an organisation and with the level of utilization of all the available capacities. Variable expenses are the subject of research and by actively managing them, better working conditions are created and the productivity is increased. A significant part of the expenditure of every organisation is the expenses incurred by work related injuries. It is clear that the organisations which undertake high risk activities spend more on work related injuries than organisations which run less risk due to the nature of their activities. However, costs incurred by work related injuries are extremely high and because of their nature a significant number of managers is unaware of their amount. According to research done by ILO (International Labour Organisation), it has been concluded that on one monetary unit, which can be measured as a direct consequence of a work related injury, come four monetary units which cannot be measured and expressed in monetary units [Todorović, Živković, 2010, p. 315]. All this emphasises the need for creating a culture which will promote safe working environment as a significant component of development and increase of business competences of any organisation. The consequences of a change in the culture reflect in two directions: economic and human. Economic aspect refers to reductions of the costs incurred by work related injuries while the human aspect refers to the protection of a human life as an utmost value.

Taking into consideration what has been said previously, it is undoubtedly clear that the role of human resources is of great importance for creating business environment which will

create pre-requirements for using all the potentials of an organisation. Creating an organisational culture which will gradually change the attitudes of the employees and induce the creation of values which will influence the way how the employees react in certain situations is a very significant pre-requirement for increasing the business competences of an organisation and the society on the whole. It is clear that this is not a short process and that it does not end when a certain level of compatibility of the organisational culture values has been achieved. Precisely because of the changes which characterise today's environment it is necessary to keep redefining the existing values, to synchronise them with the vision and the mission of the organisation and to motivate the employees to actively participate in the changes that occur in the organisation. It is our aim to analyse the available domestic and foreign literature which deals with combining of the organisational culture values, managing organisations, and lowering the costs incurred by work related injuries. The result of the analysis should point out the links between these factors and their influence on the enhancement of business competences of an organisation.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

By analysing the available domestic and foreign literature we have concluded that no research, which analyses the influence of the organisational culture and a certain system of values, assumptions and norms of behaviour which are focused on occupational safety and health on defining strategies which deal with management of the human resources, has been done. Due to this, a descriptive method of analysing the available literature has been used in this paper. In order to perceive the subject of the research clearly, we will define some of the basic terms connected with the organisational culture and human resources. In addition to this, a comparative analysis of the research conducted in Serbia and Slovenia based on the identical questionnaire will be given in order to present some trends more clearly.

## **3 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**

Any society is based on the cultural heritage which is created during the development of the society. Organisational culture is a recent phenomenon and after analysing the available literature it can be said that a relatively low number of researchers grants this business component its deserved place. There are various definitions of organisational culture. Long ago, in 431 BC in ancient Greece, Pericles urged Athenians to respect values such as human dignity. He realised that a war victory or defeat might depend on such values [Weihrich, Koontz, 1994, p. 333]. The concept of organisational culture was not something completely unknown in the organisational theory. The organisational culture was mentioned for the first time in the 30s, after Hawthorne experiments [Ivanova, Prihodko, 2008]. Mayo and other Harvard experts took the stance that the bipolar structure of the industrial organisation should be replaced by a classic monopolar model of the organisation. In monopolar organisations, a strict hierarchy of the statuses and roles is dominant. According to them, the more system suppresses personality, the easier and more predictable it is thus it is much easier to manage. With the appearance of the Human Relation Movement, the perception and the understanding of the performers of certain activities changed significantly. The organisational culture as a scientific discipline within the organisational theory appeared around 30 years ago when in 1981 it was introduced as a subject at the Harvard University. The problem is that for a long time it was not clearly presented and studied as a separate scientific discipline. In the last two decades, more and more researchers are dealing with the appearance of the organisational

cultures while doing research in the field of organisational theory [Handy, 1979; Morgan, 1997; Robbins, Judge, 2001].

One of the comprehensive definitions defines organisational culture as a system of assumptions, beliefs, values and norms of behaviour, which the members of an organisation develop and implement through mutual experience, which manifests through symbols and which directs their thinking and behaviour [Janićijević, 1997]. Understanding the behaviour of the employees in an organisation requires discovering their values, beliefs, customs, rituals or symbols. It is clear that we cannot talk about these values as permanent categories, which last for a long time in the same form. People are social beings and there is a desire in each of use for affiliation, bonding, and trust, both on the individual and on the group level. Adjusting individual attitudes to group values is a process that takes time and thus it is necessary to actively manage this process. While developing an organisation, there is always a question of how to create an ideal organisation through which pre- requirements for the efficacy and productivity increase of the whole system will be created in the easiest possible way. It has been noted that the productivity is highest in the countries with long history. The economic success of the Japanese economy is frequently accounted for by the openness of the Japanese culture for the other cultures, while respecting their own traditions at the same time. Many think that e.g. the Japanese company Sony achieved a big increase in the foreign markets precisely because of the respect they showed towards other cultures and customs [Žugaj, Cingula, 1992, p. 207].

Every organisation has its own cultural model which shapes the behaviour of all the members of the organisation. Without understanding that model, the organisation and the members of the organisation cannot be actively managed, nor can the business revenues be predicted. It is important to mention that the culture model must adapt to the environment in which the organisation operates. The superficial analysis of the behaviour of managers and the employees in different countries may show that there are no significant differences in their everyday behaviour. However, a more detailed analysis will show small differences which have a significant effect on the performance results of an organisation. Noticing those differences allows us to better predict the future behaviour in different national cultures. Clearly defining the current position is the main pre-requirement for undertaking any corrective actions with the aim of enhancing the operations of the organisation.

Numerous researchers in the field of management have concluded that the successful companies have a strong organisational culture with clearly defined attitudes, values and beliefs. However, a strong organisational culture has some disadvantages as well. Badly defined values, attitudes and beliefs, and the lack of clear picture about the quality of defined values can create pre-requirements for huge losses. The cause of potential losses may be the lack of desire, or the incompetence of the manager to create an appropriate organisational culture and to actively manage it. Any change is difficult. If an employee has a wrong perception about the quality of an attitude or a value, and the managers lack the needed knowledge and patience to present the advantages of the change in the way he or she perceive a certain attitude or a value in a right way, the economic losses are inevitable. There is no doubt that the organisational culture should be one of the pillars on which the development strategy of an organisation is based. The organisational culture is not only a measure of the value of an organisation, but also of the value of each member of the organisation. Culture induces the belief that the employees do not work only for money, but also for the satisfaction of the product or service users which is in the end reflected through the safety of the

organisation and its members. Organisational culture has an influence on: the way strategic decisions are made, the level of adaptations to the changes in the environment, defining of mechanisms for coordination and control of all the business operations in the organisation, the way conflicts are dealt with and on the motivation of the employees. There is not a good or bad organisational culture. Organisational culture which is good at a certain point in time might be completely inadequate in another. There is not an ideal culture and every organisation tends to create an appropriate culture in accordance with the level of its business growth and the attitudes of its members. A good manager must be capable of recognising and perceiving the attitudes of his or her employees. The most important thing a manager should do is to assess who can do what and that he or she divides tasks according to that. The assessment of the capabilities and competences of all the employees is an extremely complicated process and the contribution of the individuals within the organisation depends on this process. Whether the competences of the certain employees are overestimated or underestimated, the consequence might be the disruption of the rapport among the employees which can lead to the deterioration of the competences of the organisation. In the process of creating and changing the key values of the organisational culture, leaders must be the animators of changes, creators of new culture and guards of acquired values.

#### **4 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

If we go back to history and analyse the significance of the production components for the creation of a new value, we can easily conclude that in the initial capital accumulation phase, human resources had no role at all. The labour was treated as an expendable good and no one dealt with that. As the time passed the realisation that the material resources are not the most important factor in enhancing the business competences of an organisation has been more and more frequent. In times of globalisation, when the increasing number of organisations turns to cost reductions as a way of increasing their revenues, the significance of the human resources as a factor in increasing the profitability of the company becomes more evident. This is as well indicated by the current situation when one of the decision making factors for investment, for both domestic and foreign investors, are human resources, their quality and competences. It is difficult to take a step forward towards modern markets and global international game without the appropriate, qualified staff.

The increase in productivity occurs in the process of knowledge development, those are some of the basic characteristics of the human resources. The following question arises automatically: How to manage such an important resource in business processes? How to use all the benefits of the motivated human resources in the process of enhancing the business competences of an organisation and creating the better start-up position in the everyday international or local market game? In order to answer some of the aforementioned questions, we need to start from the analysis of what drives the human resources. Long time ago, the main tendency of an individual was to satisfy his basic life needs. As the society develops and the life standards improve, the order of priorities in expectations of the human resources changes as well. Satisfying the basic needs is something that is implied and what people strive for is the acceptance of their personality and their status.

Due to the specificity of the human resources in the process of creating new values, the role of sectors which deal with human resources within an organisation is of great importance. In order to use the potentials of an organisation in the best possible way, it is necessary to create an appropriate environment which will instigate the constant wish and need for training of all

the employees. Such environment in which it is strived for continual education and enhancement of all the business activities in the organisation might be demotivating for those who are unwilling to participate in continual education and training. Organisations should find out what is the cause of such an attitude or behaviour of an employee who resists the changes or training. Pre-requirements for the change in the opinions and attitudes must be created by adequate education and synchronised approach on an individual level. Each employee is a separate individual and thus it is necessary to invest additional effort in order to gradually close the gap between the attitudes of the individual and the organisation. Amazing results might often be achieved with the existing staff with continual training and conversations with all the employees. By formulating the appropriate policy for management of the human resources as an important factor in the process of productivity growth, requirements for the increase of the business competences of the organisation are created. Stimulation and motivation of the employees fully benefits the process of enhancement of the individual and business competences of all the participants in the business process. The appropriate techniques might create conditions for the active participation of all the entities of an organisation in creating a stimulating surrounding. Of course, fines are the other side of the coin and are sometimes the only solution for a certain problem.

## **5 HUMAN RESOURCES AND THE COSTS OF WORK RELATED INJURIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TOWARDS ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**

The role of departments which deal with the human resources management in relation to the tendency towards creating a safe and secure working environment is very important. Continual education of all the members of an organisation should include the system of safety and health at work as an important aspect which can lead to many savings within the organisation. Certain costs might be translated into money, but the human life can hardly be valorised in certain monetary units. Due to this, departments which deal with human resources represent an active participant in the process of development and creation of the conscious about the significance of respecting the prescribed procedures for safe work. Only through integrated operations of all the sectors in the organisation, conditions for safe and secure work might be created.

Studying the primary values of the organisational culture and work culture, in relation to the ways of managing the human resources, comes from the internationalisation of the business activities. While respecting the cultural differences which impact the operations of an organisation, a question of how to attract the best there is on the human resources market arises. The main goal is to attract as many candidates as possible so that the organisation could choose the best candidate for a certain position through a clearly planned selection process. There is always a question what is better: to recruit a candidate from the organisation or to bring someone from outside. Both options have its advantages and disadvantages. If you decide to continually run the selection of candidates who you recruit, follow their work, and after some period of time after checking their capabilities, find them an appropriate position. The advantage of choosing someone from the organisation is that you already know all the characteristics of a potential candidate thus it is easier to choose the best candidate. The disadvantage of this choice of selecting a candidate springs from the fact that in a large number of companies a monotonous atmosphere is created over time which reduces the creativity and inventiveness of the members of the organisation. The choice of the external candidate may bring an additional impulse which would generate new ideas and views on the business activities and this might be an excellent option. The problem with this option lies in

the fact that a wrong choice is possible and this might jeopardise the existing culture and organisation of work. As we can see, the choice of a right candidate is not a simple activity and it requires continual training and education in departments which deal with human resources. The choice of a right candidate brings, among other things, significant savings as every employee who starts working in an organisation generates expenditure in the initial phase. It takes time before an employee fully adapts to the organisation and before he or she takes certain tasks and responsibilities. One bad choice is not such a big problem, but if that becomes a routine, wrong choices might considerably increase the expenditure of an organisation and create a negative image in the external surroundings. Organisational culture has a significant influence on all the business activities in an organisation. Activities in the sphere of health and safety at work are not an exception. The influence of an organisational culture is difficult to exemplify with direct data and economic indicators, either positive or negative. However, according to many authors there is a clear link, but the theoretical models have not been defined yet, neither has some significant research been done which would be representative and enable taking a certain stance. There are various methods and techniques both in theory and in practice which are aimed at increasing the health and safety at work. Two famous authors divide the history of safety research and safety enhancement into three phases [Hale, Hoveden, 1998]. In the first phase, safety was regarded as a technical and technological problem and all the research dealt with the efficacy increase of the instruments. This phase lasted from the beginning of the 18th century till the beginning of the 19th century. This period is characterised by a great market desire for any product, thus the main goal of the organisations was to increase the production volume. Few theoreticians and practitioners dealt with the effects of the rapid development of technologies on the labour and with the potential consequences for their safety. The second phase is characterised by paying more attention to increasing safety through strategic recruiting, employees' skills enhancement and increased effort to boost the motivation of the employees. These are the measures which tend to improve work on an individual level. The third phase started in the 1980s, and is characterised by paying more attention to the organisational conditions for safety with the emphasis on management.

## **6 STUDYING THE ROLE OF THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**

The main pre-requirement for raising awareness of the significance and influence of the organisational culture on the health and safety systems points out the need for conducting more and more research. Unfortunately, in Serbia, there is not much research dealing with the organisational culture, and there is only one research that dealt with the link between the organisational culture and occupational health and safety, and the emphasis was put on the managers' relation to the organisational culture in the process of creating a safe environment. It is clear that through the educational processes and raising awareness of the significance and the link between the organisational culture, human resources and work related injuries, research must be organised with the aim of collecting as much data as possible. The comprehensive analysis of the available research and papers dealing with organisational culture pointed out the need for creating a clear concept, both methodological and theoretical, which will provide the future researchers with clear framework to be used in their research. Regardless of the fact whether it is research in a certain organisation or it is research in a few organisations, it is necessary to define a uniform model which will create pre-requirements for the comparison with other research. Results that will be obtained in such an analysis might be the basis for undertaking corrective steps in the process of creating an optimal organisational culture. In order to perceive more clearly the significance and the role of the organisational

culture in the process of creating safe working environment, which will in the end have an impact on the expenditure of an organisation, we will show a part of research results. Research has been conducted in Slovenia and Serbia and it was based on the identical questionnaire. The research sample included 62 organisations in Slovenia and 62 interviewees. The sample in Serbia included 73 organisations and 801 interviewees. In the following section we will show the way in which certain claims are assessed when it comes to the values of the organisational culture such as: COOPERATION, FEEDBACK, RESPECT.

*Table 1: Results of research in Slovenia [Kolenc, 2009]*

COOPERATION	The average value	Standard deviation
I promote cooperation when it comes to Health and Safety at Work	5.55	1.51
I question and encourage employees to improve the issues relate to Health and Safety at Work	5.35	1.51
I help the others to deal with the challenging situations related to Health and Safety at Work	5.16	1.57
I encourage the acceptance and implementation of new solutions	5.98	1.43
I am ready to listen	6.56	1.07
I trust the others	5.74	1.49
I support other people's decisions	6.08	1.39
I get the approval of the others before implementing innovations	5.40	1.51

*Table 2: Results of research in Serbia (own source)*

COOPERATION	The average value	Standard deviation
I promote cooperation when it comes to Health and Safety at Work	4.75	2.03
I question and encourage employees to improve the issues relate to Health and Safety at Work	4.26	2.10
I help the others to deal with the challenging situations related to Health and Safety at Work	4.59	2.00
I encourage the acceptance and implementation of new solutions	4.59	2.13
I am ready to listen	6.09	1.51
I trust the others	4.79	1.90
I support other people's decisions	5.16	1.69
I get the approval of the others before implementing innovations	4.51	1.97

By looking at the results we notice that the highest values are those relating to the readiness of the employees to listen. This is on one hand good, but on the other hand, according to the authors it is of great importance that all the employees actively participate in business

operations and that they give suggestions which will create conditions for a safer working environment. It is interesting that the interviewees in both countries have high values when it comes to the level of support to the others to make decisions on their own. This can be interpreted as the unwillingness to take responsibility for the decisions that have been made. The lowest value when it comes to the interviewees from Slovenia is noticed in the question dealing with the need to help the other employees accept certain standards. The lowest value in the Serbian sample points out the lack of wish to enhance the production process and create a safe working environment through cooperation with other employees.

*Table 3: Results of research in Slovenia [Kolenc, 2009]*

FEEDBACK AND RESPECT	The average value	Standard deviation
I publicly acknowledge other people`s contribution	6.37	1.23
I immediately pay tribute to those who contributed to the enhancement of health and safety at work	5.87	1.47
I encourage others and I do not criticize attempts	5.67	1.50
I give positive feedback and I reward successfully realised measures	5.67	1.50
I motivate all the employees	5.70	1.50
I celebrate the success related to Health and Safety at work	4.15	2.02

*Table 4: Results of research in Serbia (own source)*

FEEDBACK AND RESPECT	The average value	Standard deviation
I publicly acknowledge other people`s contribution	5.84	1.66
I immediately pay tribute to those who contributed to the enhancement of health and safety at work	5.74	1.73
I encourage others and I do not criticize attempts	5.55	1.74
I give positive feedback and I reward successfully realised measures	5.59	1.79
I motivate all the employees	4.57	2.14
I celebrate the success related to Health and Safety at work	4.08	2.31

By looking at the results of research in both countries we notice again certain regularities, and that is that the interviewees in both countries assign the highest values in the part dealing with public appraisal of the contribution to the work process by other employees whose work has helped make an advance in creating a safer working environment. At the same time we notice that the both groups of the interviewees are not interested for celebrating the success related to health and safety at work. The employees` and managers` have a huge responsibility to create a safe working environment. Laws and sub-legal acts clearly define that both managers and employees are to create safe working environment. Because of this, it is very important to raise awareness about the increased responsibility to yourself and the other employees who share the same working environment while undertaking certain activities.

The influence of the inappropriate organisational culture, as a consequence of the lack of clear vision of human resources management, will lead to creation of the conditions in which the probability of work related injuries is higher. The consequences of the work related injuries are reflected in significant business costs which might seriously disturb the financial stability of an organisation. The role of the employees in the process of comprehending micro and macro environment is of great importance for the beginning of the creation of the safe working environment. There are not important and less important links in that chain. Managers have their role, but every employee also has a very important role in the process of creating and understating of the processes which happen during certain activities in the organisation. Everyone has a different perspective on a certain situation and everyone actively participates in all the processes which will contribute to the better understanding of those situations.

Good management often gets very important information from the actors themselves, information which cannot be obtained through observation. Such an approach, from the perspective of traditional theories of organisation, is disputable since the questions of authority and who makes decision in case there are opposed views arise. Opposed attitudes are to a certain extent a great way to get as much information as possible from all the participants about how the employees see certain processes. Of course, the management is the one to make decision but all the decisions must respect all the members of an organisation because only in that way the main goal may be achieved. The main goal is an universal organisational culture which will fit all the individual values and attitudes into collective values and attitudes which will become a hallmark of a certain organisation. There always needs to be a certain level of discordance with the existing culture and its values because in that way active synchronisation with the changes happening in the environment is enabled.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

Linking the role and significance of the organisational culture to the human resources management is not something unknown. The lack of coordination in the process of creating an appropriate culture indirectly causes the reduction of productivity which reflects on the expenditure growth. A simple example might be the costs incurred by work related injuries. These injuries are frequently caused by the employees' lack of attention which is a consequence of his or her bad safety culture. All this points out the link between organisational culture, human resources and occupational health and safety, as factors which can to a greater extent create pre-requirements for enhancement of business competences of an organisation and the society on the whole. Departments which deal with human resources within the organisation are to face the constant challenge of coordinating individual attitudes and values with proclaimed, targeted values. Without appropriate education of both managers and the employees, it can be hardly expected that the conditions will be created which will enable that all the resources are used for the enhancement of the business competences of an organisation. Employees' motivation and willingness to change their attitudes and values and to prefer the collective over individual play an important role in that process. Based on everything said, we believe that we have proven the initial hypothesis that 'human capital, through appropriate organizational culture, contributes to decreasing the number and the severity of work related injuries, thus lowering the costs and increasing the organizational competencies'. The future research should firstly incorporate the ethnographic methods with the aim of creating a certain model of behaviour through the analysis of the employees'

behaviour and the employees' perception of the creation of the safe working environment in a certain number of organisations. In the next phase, such a model would present its financial aspect which is created by the decrease in the number and severity of the work related injuries.

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