Moving Toward Participation and Involvement

MANAGING AND MEASURING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

SONIA ZAMANOU
Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville
SUSAN R. GLASER
University of Oregon

This article describes a communication intervention program designed to change the culture of a governmental organization from hierarchical and authoritarian to participative and involved. This cultural shift is then measured through a triangulation approach. Specifically, questionnaires, interview data, and direct observation were combined to study the areas of cultural change. Subjects completed the Organizational Culture scale (OCS) before the intervention and a representative sample was interviewed. Then, the entire organization participated in an organizational development program. Two years later, subjects again completed the OCS and were interviewed. The postintervention results were statistically analyzed and compared to the preintervention data. Finally, subjects were directly observed in the workplace. These observations and the interview data placed the results of statistical analyses in context by specifying and clarifying perceptions of change. Results suggest that the organization changed significantly in the following dimensions: information flow, involvement, morale, and meetings. Specific implications for management practice are discussed.

This is a longitudinal, empirical study assessing one organization's movement toward a more involved and participative culture. Organizational culture, which has received increased attention over the last 2 decades, is frequently described in terms of shared meaning—patterns of belief, symbols, rituals, and myths that evolve over time and function as the glue that holds the organization together (Baker, 1980; Pettigrew, 1979; Siehl & Martin, 1982; Smirchich, 1981; 1983). Others (Louis, 1980; Meyer, 1982) add that culture consists of shared values and beliefs that not only bind people together but also explain their world. Kreps (1984, p. 2) defines culture as

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"collectively held underlying logics and legends about organizational life and the organization's identity." Some stress the organization's shared expectations for consensually approved behavior as the most important component of culture (Schwartz & Davis, 1981; Silverzweig & Allen, 1976; Spradley & McCurdy, 1972; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984).

Much inconsistency plagues the conceptualization of organizational culture. Rousseau (1990) argues that the terms employed by organizational researchers in the investigation of culture share only a minimal "family resemblance." Underlying most conceptualizations of organizational culture are the notions of shared meaning and values as well as patterns of beliefs and expectations.

Differing paradigms have been developed for understanding organizational culture. The functionalist paradigm asserts that organizations produce cultures. Research aims, through scientific rigor and objectivity, to empirically discover concrete, tangible, pragmatic indicators of culture (Putnam, 1982). On the other hand, the interpretive paradigm contends that organizations *are* cultures because their existence is based on human interaction. Research focuses on understanding how organizational members make sense of their particular organization. This research constructs a story of organizational life in all its fullness (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983).

Not only do the definitions of culture vary widely across organizational researchers, but also the types of data they collect. Rousseau (1990) supports that organizational researchers, though conceptualizing culture similarly, have assessed widely different elements. Scholars tend to focus on their "preferred" set of culture elements (i.e., unconscious assumptions [Schein, 1984], values [Martin & Siehl, 1983], behavioral norms [Cooke & Rousseau, 1988], communication effectiveness [Shockley-Zalabak & Morley, 1989; Shockley-Zalabak, 1992], and material artifacts [Peters & Waterman, 1982]).

Operationalizing and measuring organizational culture is a challenging task (Akin & Hopelain, 1986; Bate, 1984; Rousseau, 1990; Zamanou & Glaser, 1989). If organizational cultures are created through symbol, ideology, belief, ritual, and myth, then describing and documenting a given culture is methodologically complex. Rousseau (1990) argues that culture has many elements "layered along a continuum of subjectivity and accessibility" (p. 157). Researchers tend to choose their particular layer of culture (i.e., artifacts, patterns of behavior, behavioral norms, values, assumptions). More subjective and less observable, deeper layers (such as patterns of belief, organizational values and assumptions) are studied indirectly through the use of multiple methods designed to tap the range of cultural elements and processes.

One of the first studies employing multiple measures to study organizational culture was conducted by Glaser, Zamanou, and Hacker (1987), who measured organizational culture through a triangulation approach. These researchers employed reliably coded interviews to help interpret and place in context the results of statistical analyses of the Organizational Culture scale (OCS). From the analysis of these data emerged a description of an organization's culture, the validity of which was enhanced by the triangulation of coder interpretations with standardized questionnaire measures (Babbie, 1983).

Organizational culture change has also received considerable attention for the last decade. Many researchers (Lundberg, 1985; Schein, 1985; Siehl, 1985; Thackray, 1986) agree that organizational change implies cultural change, and that implementing it is a challenging process. Deal and Kennedy (1982) operationalize this cultural change as "people telling different stories to each other to explain what is occurring around them, people spending their time differently on a day-to-day basis" (p. 158). Siehl (1985) suggests that "perhaps culture management is really this: Articulating a possible culture, coming to agree that it is desirable, and then attaining it through the sharing of desired values" (p. 139). Many organizations (i.e., McDonald's®, GE®, Hewlett-Packard®, AT&T®) have consciously tried and succeeded in changing their cultures to achieve their goals of higher productivity and employee motivation (Cline, 1988; Tunstall, 1983).

This research is an account of an organization's changing culture because it focuses on shared perceptions of organizational members (Rousseau, 1990; Schneider, 1990) created through communication and social interaction. The specific purpose of this longitudinal study is to assess cultural change toward more participation and involvement in a governmental organization in the Pacific Northwest. Employees at every level reported that this was a culture in need of change. They were outraged by the unwillingness of authoritarian managers to include employee contributions in decision making. Managers did not believe that they could depend on each other or their employees to get the job done well. Finally, the elected board, which was in a position to direct the activities of this organization, was impatient and unhappy about the frequent complaints it received from customers. Everyone agreed that changes were needed.

Many researchers have agreed that triangulation is the most accurate way to capture the idiosyncrasies of an organization's culture because the vantage point from which we look at a phenomenon determines what it is that we will see, and no one vantage point provides a complete picture (Faules, 1988;

Rodrick, 1988). An intriguing advantage of triangulation is the focus on multimethods (Cheney, 1983; Faules, 1982; Glaser et al., 1987; Jick, 1979; Rousseau, 1990). Triangulation combines the specificity and accuracy of quantitative data with the ability to interpret idiosyncrasies and complex perceptions, provided by qualitative analysis (Kreps, 1989).

This research compared questionnaires, interview data, and direct observation before (Time 1) and after (Time 2) the two-year intervention to discover the extent to which the culture of this organization had shifted toward more participation and involvement. Specifically, the following hypothesis was tested in this research:

Hypothesis: Ratings at Time 2 will be significantly higher than those at Time 1 in all six subscales of the OCS (teamwork, morale, supervision, involvement, information flow, meetings).

METHOD

DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECTS

The governmental organization under study is a six-division county department in the Pacific Northwest, composed of 322 employees. The sample in this study consisted of subjects from every level and division in the organization (line workers, supervisors, clerical staff, professional-technical staff, and top management).

Subjects responded to the OCS and were interviewed twice within a two-year period. Every employee was given a survey and a total of 243 subjects returned the OCS at Time 1 of data collection. A total of 190 subjects responded to the OCS at Time 2 of data collection two years later. A representative sample of 76 employees participated in interviews at Time 1. This sample was selected from both volunteers and assigned employees. The goal was to create a sample representing every level and division in the organization. A representative sample of 94 employees from every level and division in the organization participated in interviews at Time 2 of the project. All 76 subjects interviewed at Time 1 were again interviewed at Time 2. Interviews took place in a private conference room and employees were given time from work to participate. Only the researcher kept a list of the names of the people interviewed. Finally, the researchers directly observed employees in the actual work context.

ASSESSMENT

Organizational Culture Scale (OCS)

The OCS is a 5-point Likert-type scale, with (1) being *strongly disagree* and (5) being *strongly agree*. It includes 31 items belonging to the following six subscales: teamwork, morale, supervision, involvement, information flow, and meetings (Glaser et al., 1987). The researchers chose the OCS to reveal how culture is created through communication. The OCS subscales and individual items represent communication dimensions of culture. Consequently, convergence of responses reveals shared perceptions of how culture is created through social interaction. Because of the uniqueness of organizational cultures, researchers have employed a variety of quantitative and qualitative measures to tap the idiosyncrasies of the culture under study. Rousseau (1990) suggests that the "method appropriate to assessing culture depends on those elements we choose to examine" (p. 166). Thus, this study employed the OCS, because it had been developed to reliably measure the culture of an organization similar to the one in this study.

The results of the OCS provided a quantitative description of the culture of the organization, but the study still lacked an exploration of the deeper, more subjective, and less observable layers of culture. Thus qualitative measures (i.e., interviews, observations) were combined with the questionnaire results to illustrate the quantitative findings and to provide an examination of the depth of the culture.

Interviews

At Time 1, 76 employees were interviewed. They represented every level and division in the organization. Interview questions during both assessment periods followed the same protocol. Subjects were asked for their perceptions of organizational teamwork, morale, supervision, involvement, and meetings. Follow-up probes then asked them to describe cultural incidents, events, and stories that helped to create their perceptions. The purpose of this critical-incident format was to discover how shared meanings were constructed among organizational members.

Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. At Time 2, the researcher interviewed a sample of 94 organizational members, again representing employees from every level and division within the organization. Two groups of subjects were interviewed: those that had been interviewed at Time 1, and new subjects who had worked in the organization since Time 1 but had not

been interviewed before. These interviews also followed a standardized, open-ended, critical-incident format, beginning with a general question, and following up with probes that asked for specific events, situations, and examples to illustrate a particular point. These interviews also lasted approximately 30 minutes. The purpose was to discover the extent to which employee perceptions had changed following the intervention.

Customer comment cards, designed to elicit customer input, were analyzed to determine the extent to which perceived internal changes were noticed by outsiders who interact with the organization. In addition, researchers interviewed members of the board of public officials who were elected to oversee the agency.

Observational Data

One researcher became a known participant observer in the organization. For an initial period of 2 months, this researcher was immersed in the organization so that her presence would not influence the behavior of organizational members during field observations. She was introduced to the whole organization through an article in the organizational newsletter, which all employees receive every month with their paycheck. Following this initial introduction, the researcher started going to work with the rest of the employees, taking coffee and lunch breaks with them, talking and joking with them, discussing work related issues and in general participating fully in organizational life.

This form of participant observation, in which members of the culture know that they are being observed, is a strong position from which to conduct ethnographic research (Germeroth, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Spradley, 1980; Walcott, 1973; Wax, 1971). Van Maanen (1987) and Schein (1987) agree that unless ethnographers enter the organization as participants, they will be subject to various fantasies about their role, and those fantasies may bias how members present themselves.

The researcher first submerged herself in the organization and completed descriptive observations of organizational life. The purpose of this stage was to familiarize herself with the organization. She then initiated the focused-observation stage. Spradley (1980, p. 77) suggests that ethnographers should choose certain cultural aspects on which to focus their observations. This choice should be based on the ethnographer's interests combined with comments by key organizational members often referred to as *consultants* (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987) or *cultural informants*. For the present project, the department director's administrative assistant and the secretary of a key

division manager served as consultants/informants. They were both located in central parts of the organization; they were highly involved in organizational life; they had been holding positions in the organization for more than five years; and they interacted with large numbers of employees daily. Finally, the focused-observation stage led to selective observation (Spradley, 1980). Specifically, this stage included observations in the communication areas investigated by the OCS and interviews: teamwork, morale, information flow, supervision, involvement, and meetings. Specific communication episodes were recorded.

Other types of hard data and cultural artifacts were also analyzed to assess cultural change. Pre- and postintervention statistics were examined comparing sick leave and total cost of such leave for the organization. Two different years were chosen for comparison: the year before the intervention started and the year the intervention ended. Finally, newsletters, comments, ratings and letters from the public were content analyzed to assess cultural change.

INTERVENTION

The intervention was designed to address the emergent issues and idiosyncrasies of this organization. Prior to the intervention, the multimethod assessment, consisting of OCS results and critical-incident interviews revealed an organization with breakdowns in teamwork at every level: labor-management, union-nonunion, office-field, across divisions and sections, and even among the executive management group. Employees at all levels were dissatisfied with the quality of supervision they received. They viewed their supervisors as old-guard and authoritarian. They reported that they rarely, if ever, got performance feedback, and when they did it was highly critical. They believed that crucial information was being guarded and kept secret, that they lacked enough information to understand the big picture or even their own job tasks. They felt certain that their opinions were not valued, and that there was virtually no opportunity to join together to mutually resolve problems. Even though they had ideas for improving work processes, they reported that they had virtually no say in decisions that affected their work. Employees at all levels were convinced that this was a culture in need of change.

The intervention was designed to address these emergent issues, and was implemented over a 2-year period. It consisted primarily of team development and communication training. Team building had three main targets: (a) the executive management team, (b) five separate division management teams, and (c) a cross-functional, multilevel team created and mandated to

make recommendations for improving communication and teamwork across the organization.

The intervention began with a 3-day retreat in which executive managers first achieved consensus on mission and values, and agreed to systematically encourage employee input, develop management skills for all supervisory staff, improve meeting productivity, and establish better communication and rapport with each other. These agreements were reached in a consensus-building process, which assisted each executive manager in discussing controversial issues (Glaser, 1994). There was also a training component in which the executive management team learned communication skills for responding to criticism, raising delicate issues, and giving praise and recognition. These were used as ground rules for the remainder of the retreat. Materials were developed so that the executive management team learned to apply these skill sets to real issues they faced with each other. This design allowed participants to simultaneously learn communication skills as they applied them to real issues that needed to be discussed openly and directly. Following this, all seven executive managers wrote detailed feedback to the other managers, identifying what they would like them to do more of, less of, or to continue. They then reported to the team about trends and insights they had received. Following this activity, the management team was divided into dyads, the pairs chosen on the basis of individuals who had specific issues to resolve with each other. The dyads used newly acquired communication skills to discuss their issues and to reach agreement on future action.

A similar model was then applied to each of the five division management teams. Prior to the intervention, none of the five division managers even had a management team. As a part of the intervention, each division manager identified a management team, and worked with this team to make key decisions. To encourage employee participation throughout the department, each of these management teams identified a pressing problem in their division in which employee input would be valued. Examples of problems targeted were:

1. How can we increase the efficiency, productivity, and quality of our service?
2. How can we improve communication flow between our division and the others?
3. How can our division establish a more orderly, timely flow of projects and reach our deadlines?
4. How can we increase efficiency and productivity while still maintaining a user-friendly orientation?

After targeting a pressing problem, each division management team then appointed a team of employees, representing every level and function in their

division, to meet collaboratively to examine the problem and recommend solutions.

To move an organization's culture toward increased participation and involvement requires more than team building. Managers, supervisors, and employees all needed to learn new communication skills and strategies. Modules were developed to teach participative leadership skills to every supervisor and manager in the organization. Employees also received training to help them make the transition to a more involved culture; for example, they learned skills for raising issues and making suggestions without hostility and anger. Finally, a facilitator training program was developed to teach basic process consultation skills to selected organizational members, representing every level and division. The goal was to fade out consultant contact and replace it with in-house organizational facilitators. All training was conducted through a four-step behavioral shaping process that included conceptual presentation, dramatization, written practice, and behavioral rehearsal (Glaser, Piland, & Anderson, 1990).

After the 21-month intervention program was concluded, the OCS was re-administered to the whole organization, to assess which aspects of the organization's culture had changed, and which areas needed further development. To interpret the questionnaire results, the administration of the scale was followed by interviews with key people from every level and division in the organization.

RESULTS

Ratings on the questionnaires were combined with data from the interviews to compare the culture of this organization before and after the intervention. Interview data were analyzed by three trained coders who were graduate students. After intense training with the researchers, these coders had achieved intercoder reliability of .80. They sorted the data into six operationally defined categories, corresponding to the subscales of the OCS.

The hypothesis was partly confirmed. OCS ratings for the organization were significantly higher at Time 2 than at Time 1 for the following subscales: information flow ($t = 2.64, p < .006$); involvement ($t = 2.04, p < .04$); meetings ($t = 3.56, p < .0004$); morale ($t = 10.19, p < .0001$). Ratings at Time 2 were not significantly higher than those at Time 1 for the following subscales: teamwork ($\overline{X}_1 = 3.14, \overline{X}_2 = 3.19$) and supervision ($\overline{X}_1 = 3.14, \overline{X}_2 = 3.15$). Table 1 presents means, standard deviations, and t tests for all the subscales of the OCS.

TABLE 1
Comparison of Time 1 and Time 2 Means, Standard Deviations, and *t* tests by Subscale

	Subscales					
	Information Flow	*Meetings*	*Involvement*	*Morale*	*Teamwork*	*Supervision*
Time 1						
M	2.58	2.69	2.75	2.10	3.25	3.14
SD	(1.06)	(0.94)	(0.99)	(0.82)	(0.78)	(0.87)
Time 2						
M	2.83	3.01	2.95	2.89	3.37	3.19
SD	(0.85)	(0.90)	(1.02)	(0.98)	(0.80)	(0.96)
t test	2.64	3.56	2.04	10.19	—	—
	($p < .006$)	($p < .0004$)	($p < .04$)	($p < .0001$)	n.s.	n.s.

The remainder of this section will present the interview results for each of the subscales of the OCS.

Involvement. Ratings on the questionnaires were significantly higher at Time 2 than they were at Time 1 ($t = 2.04$, $p < .04$). Interview data revealed that prior to the intervention, employees expressed resentment and anger toward what they perceived to be a hierarchical, authoritarian organization, which shut out their ideas. One employee stated, "We are adults and [we] don't need to be treated like children. We have input and [we] want to share it." Similarly, a different employee explained, "They even took away our autonomy to make our own breaks." Another employee said, "We are not supposed to have any ideas. We are never asked." Someone else felt "slapped on the hand" every time he offered his opinion. Another employee asserted, "People are scared that they are going to lose a little power. Their employees may know as much as they do." Finally, someone else said, "The only way to get things done around here is to scream loud enough."

Employees reported that their opinions were not valued by management, that they had little say in decisions that affected their work, and that even though they had suggestions for improving work processes, their opinions were not welcome. One employee said, "There are better ways to do things but I have no way of telling them. Nobody asks me." Another employee added, "I can say things that would make a difference. Nobody cares to hear them." Someone else asserted, "We need a new alignment machine. [I sug-

gested] one that would save money. The supervisor could not decide. He'll always do what he thinks is right. He doesn't care about what we think." Another employee said, "[My supervisor] makes me take the machine apart. Then he realizes that the parts are too expensive and it never gets fixed. I could have told him that." This theme was expressed in almost every division and seemed to be the one that caused most concern among employees, who were convinced that they knew how to do their job better than anyone else and wanted to be consulted on important decisions concerning their work.

Following the intervention, involvement and participation were viewed very differently. One employee said, "My supervisor is very open to suggestions. The manager will choose the best approach, even if the lowest guy has suggested it. And if he doesn't accept it, he'll tell you why." Another employee added, "My supervisor comes to me and says, 'Do you think this is going to work?' " Employees generally felt that their knowledge on work related matters was appreciated and valued by the organization. One employee said, "[When] they designed the new building and purchased new machines, they had workers make recommendations." Another employee added, "Now they ask the guy who operates the heavy machines to make the decisions." Along the same lines, a third employee said, "Two years ago I made a suggestion of cutting brush along the roads. It was dropped. I said it again and it was tried on the road. They liked it. I feel I can talk to them about anything."

Most employees agreed that they were much more involved in decision making and that they were given more authority and responsibility. One employee said, "My supervisor asks me which way is better. Even when he doesn't ask, I feel I can tell him what I think." Supervisors and managers confirmed this perception. One manager said, "We seldom make a decision without our employees' input. For example, we tried to get a crane. They had their heart set on one, and another [company] came with a lower bid. I gave them the information and they decided on the lower [bid]. Now everyone is pleased because they were part of the decision." Another supervisor said, "In the beginning you feel that you are giving up power but the results were great. So, it's worth it."

Direct observation revealed numerous changes, made to elicit input into decision making from all parts of the organization. Two organization-wide task teams were created by management. Their purpose was to encourage representatives from all levels to make recommendations about serious matters that affected organizational life. Both teams were composed of employees from all levels and divisions in the organization. These teams met regularly, and the majority of their recommendations (from the implementa-

tion of a department-wide newsletter to a redesign of the performance review system), were accepted by management. Researchers also observed task team meetings and staff meetings at the division level. Everyone at these meetings was treated equally. Facilitators were as likely to interrupt a manager as they were a line worker to bring the discussion on target.

Morale. Ratings on the questionnaire were significantly higher at Time 2 than they were at Time 1 ($t = 10.19, p < .0001$). The interviews revealed that before the intervention the culture in this organization was characterized by lack of motivation on the part of employees. Employees reported that management did not value their hard work and was not interested in them as individuals. This theme was expressed in a variety of ways. One employee complained, "If [the organization] wants to keep me, they have to show that they care about me as a person. It's not the money." Another employee said, "Our staff is at minimum; there is no back up for sickness or vacations. People feel guilty about taking time off." Someone else added, "Management says 'well, of course take the time' without understanding the stress it causes on already overworked people." Employees described morale as at an all time low, and they repeatedly gave examples which, they believed, indicated a lack of trust and respect for workers. An employee said, "They changed my phone line without asking me. It caused me not to be able to do my job. Nobody can find me anymore. They just came in picked up the phone and left."

Many reported that the organization treated people unfairly and inconsistently. One employee stated, "We had vacations scheduled and then we got a memo and all bets were off. Nobody explained why. It's an insult." Someone else complained that her office mate "found out that she was going to be laid off through the grapevine." Another employee was positive that supervisors had favorites who "can't do anything wrong. Plus they get all the easy jobs." Someone else felt excluded, "Nobody cares about me. My boss definitely doesn't care." Employees thought that management considered them "expendable" and treated them as "second-class citizens." One employee said, "The heating/cooling system is bad, but they don't care if you are hot or cold. No one cares if [the employees] are happy." They also thought that how much they cost was more of a concern than how well they performed the task, "Our work is not considered. Only how much we cost. They'd rather hire someone at a lower step to save money." Many employees expressed bitterness over the hiring and promotion procedure. One employee said, "I applied for [the] foreman's [position]. I had more knowledge than most. I did not even get an interview. Others got an interview with less knowledge than me." Another

employee agreed that the "qualifications of the people promoted are doubtful. Why do they get promoted instead of someone else?" One employee captured the belief of many, "You have to belong to the right group to get promoted around here." Many employees indicated that they wanted to receive a different expression of appreciation than money, "I was criticized for wanting to move. They think I want more money. I want to expand my job. If I say I want more work [they think] that's bad."

After the intervention, many employees reported that they were highly motivated to contribute to the organization because they felt that management appreciated their contributions and cared about them as individuals. One employee said, "They ordered special chairs for our backs. They let us choose our own chair." Someone else added, "With the changes they have made, I feel I can stay here for a very long time." Employees felt that management expressed gratitude for employee contributions in many different ways. An employee said, "I see a change in gratitude in addition to the paycheck." Many employees mentioned the social functions sponsored by the organization—the "Recognition Dinner" and the "Road-e-o" as creating a family atmosphere and a generous expression of management's appreciation. Employees appreciated the opportunity to get together with their co-workers outside of work, and they reported a greater feeling of "belonging to this organization" as a result of these functions, "The 'Dinner' and the 'Road-e-o' were excellent. For the first time they did something for us."

Direct observation revealed numerous changes made by the organization for the personal benefit of employees as well as the agency. These changes were mentioned frequently by employees as examples to indicate that the organization cared about them as individuals; for example, first aid kits were installed in all work areas and in all the vehicles. In addition, an exercise facility was established, with modern equipment for the use of all employees. The organization also sponsored drug and alcohol awareness programs for all field workers and their supervisors and first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training for all employees. Finally, the organization instituted regular fire drills, back injury inspections, and defensive driving workshops. Employees agreed that these actions significantly improved the organization's morale by demonstrating that management cared about the employees as people. As one employee put it, "I enjoy coming to work in the morning. I am loving it." Another employee added, "People used to be apathetic. Now they are more energetic and motivated." A third employee summarized the feelings of many, "I was pessimistic before [the intervention] started. I have seen a very positive change. People are putting in extra hours and things are looking good."

Meetings. Ratings on the questionnaire were significantly higher at Time 2 than they were at Time 1 ($t = 3.56, p < .0004$). Interviews revealed that prior to the intervention lack of scheduled meetings was a real concern. One employee said, "It's typical. They say 'we'll have meetings every Friday morning.' I haven't seen any in over a month. How do they expect us to believe them?" Several employees agreed and they expressed the desire to have regular meetings to "give pats" and to "receive feedback."

Employees felt that without meetings they did not have a place to bring up and discuss their concerns and to contribute to decisions about their organizational lives. Employees in most divisions agreed that the few meetings they did have were too long, disorganized, and with no follow-up action taken. Many employees complained of no opportunity to present ideas in meetings. The flow of information during meetings was unidirectional—from supervisors to workers. Others reported that even when discussion was allowed, few participated. Most agreed that decisions were rarely made and when they were made, seldom translated into action.

Following the intervention, meetings became a more regular part of organizational life. At a minimum, each supervisor was expected to have a weekly 15-30 minute meeting, where employees were invited to share their opinions and concerns. The purpose of these meetings was to encourage a two-way exchange of information concerning approaches to work assignments. Employees felt more involved in decision making because of their regular meetings. They found these meetings very productive. Because part of the intervention taught group facilitation skills to all supervisors and managers, meetings were observed to be involving and action oriented. One employee said, "Crew meetings are very good and lots comes out [of them]." Someone else added, "[In meetings] we're given the general view of what is going on. We talk about what concerns us."

Information flow. Ratings on the questionnaire were significantly higher at Time 2 than they were at Time 1 ($t = 2.64, p < .006$). Interview data revealed that prior to the intervention, employees felt that they did not receive enough information to do their job well. One employee said, "I want to be a better employee. I want to be informed; I want to feel part of this [organization]." Other employees gave examples about their inability to perform adequately because of insufficient information. Someone explained, "Without facts or adequate information, it's impossible to impart competent, correct information to employees and/or the public." Another stated, "I have to rely on the grapevine. It's not always reliable." Still another employee described inefficiencies due to poor information flow, "I would like to have more informa-

tion. For example, we have terminals to take out to the sites. I get a message in the morning to set terminals up. Some of them don't even have lines. They should let me know what they're thinking so that I can tell them what I need."

Several instances were reported where the public had been misinformed because the employees did not have the necessary information. One employee said, "This is what really gets to us because we promise people they'll get something by a certain deadline and then we can't deliver. I wish we knew that from the beginning." Another employee added, "We are often ignorant of the land use regulations, code changes, current events. How can we serve the public?" As a result of this lack of information, "misinformation was given out by a planner to the public because he didn't know what was happening in the drafting room."

Others felt that they were not a part of the organization because they were not trusted with important news. One employee said, "I have to read the [newspaper] to find out what is happening in my division." Many employees saw the unwillingness to share information as an attempt by those in power to maintain their control in the organization. One employee echoed the perception of many, "Only supervisors are privy to the changes. And then they're secretive. They want to keep in control."

Following the intervention employees reported that they received much more information about the specific goals and objectives of the organization. They knew where the organization was heading and they understood "the big picture." One employee said, "I know what they want years down the road. I have all the information I need." Another employee explained the efforts made to disseminate the information, "In the office we have a routing procedure where things need to be initiated. We went to St. Rafael to see a new facility. They'll give a slide show at a staff meeting to inform everyone."

Most of the employees reported that they received enough information to do their job well. Direct observation revealed a number of organizational changes designed specifically to improve information flow. First, an electronic mail system was established, which allowed every remote zone to become connected to the rest of the organization. Everyone received training on how to use the system and terminals were sent to all work areas. The organization also developed a "Handbook Committee" to create a detailed manual for new employee orientation. Finally, and most symbolically, the minutes from managers meetings, instead of being a private document, were posted for everyone to see.

Supervision. Ratings on the questionnaires were higher at Time 2 than they were at Time 1 although the differences were not significant ($\overline{X}_1 = 3.14$, $\overline{X}_2 = 3.19$). Interview data revealed that prior to the intervention employees

were dissatisfied with the quality of supervision they received. One employee suggested, "It's about time that [the organization] hired some supervisors who are competent." Another employee added, "My supervisor is a 'yes-man' who has stepped on many toes to get to the top." Another employee complained, "I'll be doing a job and half way into it, he'll suggest a major change. It's because he didn't know how to do it right in the first place." A different employee explained, "All foremen are afraid to make mistakes. They are afraid for their own job security."

Employees reported that they rarely got performance feedback, and that when they did, it was highly critical. One employee stated, "I want to know what the goals are. I'm not just here to put in 8 hours. [Also] I need to know where I stand." Another employee added, "I never get feedback positive or negative. If I got some positive it would be easier to get the criticism." Along the same lines, someone else said, "I am tired of having fifteen people jump down my throat every time I do something wrong. Nobody says anything when I do something right." Finally, another employee asserted, "Here they chew you out for the smallest of things."

Employees at every level, from line workers to executive managers, reported seldom receiving praise for their contributions to the organization. One employee said, "[My supervisor] believes that he should not tell employees when they do good work. He says 'that's what they are paid for; only tell them when they mess up.' As a result people are not very enthusiastic. There isn't a whole lot of incentive to try harder or take risks." Another employee said, "When we write programs that save time and money, nobody comes and tells us 'that's a neat system.' We need the recognition-ego enhancing type, not money."

Employees were generally dissatisfied with their supervisors who were variously described as "indecisive, stubborn, unable to give praise for work well done, unable to accept that they made mistakes, secretive, closed with important information, inconsistent, always ready to criticize employees in public, and unwilling to delegate authority." One employee said that they needed more "open communication." Management was described as very "secretive."

After the intervention perceptions of supervision had clearly changed. One employee said, "[The division manager] is the best man I have ever worked for in my life. He listens and [he shows] concern. He and his management team have a positive attitude and that makes me want to work for them." Another employee added, "My manager is good because he cares a lot about people and he's willing to take risks." Someone else said, "I am given the freedom to run my job. I'm given the opportunity to present my ideas. [It is] much better than before." As a result of this positive perception of supervi-

sors, an employee stated, "I'd do anything for my supervisor under any condition. It pays off working for him. He gives me more positives than negatives." Others agreed, "My supervisor says when I do a good job—'Thanks for the good job; I appreciate it.' " A different employee added, "My supervisor listens to my ideas. He wants to know [if there is] an easier way of doing it." Along the same lines someone else said, "My foreman knows what he is doing otherwise he finds out. He admits it when he is wrong." Other employees illustrated how they are allowed to make their own decisions concerning their jobs, "My boss just says, 'We need to make a road here.' He lets me decide where to dig the ditch. He gives me a lot of responsibility."

Supervisors, who were rated the highest by employees, shared the following characteristics: They were described as "consistent, fair, good listeners, open, able to give praise for work well done, able to give reprimands in an effective manner, able to acknowledge their mistakes, and able to delegate authority." One employee said, "[The division manager] gets down to our level. He has made tremendous strides." Another employee added, "[The division manager] came into an element he could not understand. He is an administrator, no technical knowledge. He has learned a lot. Now I talk to him about problems and he understands." Someone else added, "[The division manager] believes in including us in decisions. He also tells his people to do that. He's much better." One employee said, "When you give him a report, [he] makes a copy with feedback 'good job.' He now even waits [until] we are alone when he has something negative to say." Someone else gave an example, "My supervisor looks for ways to improve our job. For example, we reorganized our office to have easier access." Another said "My supervisor leaves me alone because I take charge. He says, 'You're doing a great job. That's why you don't see me very often.' " Another employee said, "I have been complemented when I did well. I have been reprimanded when I did wrong. But, it means a lot to me [because] I had never been complimented before. They say 'thank you' when I do things right."

Direct observation revealed that, following the intervention, managers and supervisors kept their doors open throughout the day. The only time that their doors were closed was during private conferences with employees and other supervisors. In addition, many walls in supervisors' offices were replaced with glass windows, so that the managers were symbolically and literally more visible to employees.

Even though most employees appreciated the changes they noticed in their supervisors, some expressed complaints about one particular supervisor, who "created a bottle neck" by not delegating responsibility. Some employees expressed concern about the "mid-management block" of some middle

managers who would not delegate authority because they were afraid of losing power. Others complained about the slow rate of the changes, "They need to build on our suggestions. It's happening slowly. It needs to happen faster." This difference became more apparent in contrast with the overall positive changes in many supervisors.

Teamwork. Ratings on the questionnaire were higher at Time 2 than they were at Time 1, although the differences were not significant, ($\overline{X}_1 = 3.27$, $\overline{X}_2 = 3.37$). Interviews revealed that prior to the intervention, breakdowns in teamwork were reported between labor and management, union and nonunion, office and field, across divisions and sections, and even among the executive managers. One employee said, "People here are so aggressive; one guy is bad-mouthing another. They are competing for jobs. It's because to move up is like a political campaign." Another observed "a lot of fighting between supervisors."

Employees observed that people in the department were not direct and honest with each other. They noted that management did not confront problems constructively and that suspicion and distrust had made teamwork within the department virtually nonexistent. One employee said, "We just get rolling on a project and we're yanked off to do another. Nobody ever tells [us] why. [It is] very inefficient." A number of employees agreed that an atmosphere of tension existed among employees. One employee gave an example of mistrust, which was a major contributing factor to this tense environment, "People are holding on to information very tightly. Very little information is written down. When I ask for a Xerox copy of something people would say 'Why do you need it?' " Someone else added, "There is intense pressure. We are scrutinizing each other closely. Everyone [is] against each other. We feel so distant and separate from each other. [It] feels like a Jew in a concentration camp."

Following the intervention, employees reported an increased understanding and appreciation of the work done in divisions outside of their own as well as greater identification with the department as a whole. Employees viewed this increased sense of teamwork to be related to a number of factors. Social functions sponsored by the organization provided a chance to meet other employees away from the job. Work-related opportunities to serve on task teams with people from other parts of the organization increased employee appreciation and trust for people in areas outside their own. People who served on task teams with individuals from all levels and divisions reported that everyone's viewpoint had equal weight on these teams, regardless of formal status. For most employees, this was a first-of-a-kind experience.

For employees not directly involved in task teams, there was less opportunity for this cross-departmental trust to develop. Some employees seemed to still have complaints about communication with other divisions because of their heavy work schedules. One employee gave an example of other divisions giving them false emergencies, "People in other divisions don't understand. They say it's an emergency. We spend so much money to express the parts in, and they never pick [the machine] up."

Changes between office and field were consistently described as examples of how people from all over the organization had become part of the same team. Field crews were now welcome in the central office for the first time, and this appeared to have symbolic significance for those who discussed it. For many of those interviewed, this was the first time they would use the word teamwork to describe the organization. One division manager asserted that the aspect of the intervention that he found most helpful was "the management team. It has helped us to open up. For example, an employee had a personal problem and [he] felt comfortable to come to the management team. This never would have happened years ago."

Cultural Change Artifacts

Schein (1985) suggests that the communication artifacts and rituals of an organization often serve as a reflection of the deeper levels of culture—the values and underlying assumptions that guide the behaviors of organizational members. As a direct result of recommendations made by the cross-functional, multilevel, organization-wide PRIDE team, appointed to improve communication in the organization, a number of rituals and artifacts were introduced:

1. Each supervisor was expected to hold a brief daily or weekly meeting designed to encourage a two-way exchange of information concerning approaches to work assignments. This was an opportunity for employees and supervisors to review and preview jobs. Supervisors were held responsible for the results of these meetings to their managers.
2. A departmental newsletter was introduced. The editorial board was composed of employees from each division and level in the organization.
3. The department's entire performance review system was modified.
4. Line employees were invited to attend management team meetings on a rotating basis.
5. A departmental handbook was developed, including a list of divisions, sections and functions, key contact people, photos and job descriptions of each employee.

6. Each division established an equipment task team, including both operators and supervisors, to insure more consistent involvement of employees in the purchase of new equipment.

Following a model proposed by Miller, Zook, and Mack (1987), this section examines organizational newsletters to evaluate how the cultural change is reflected in them. Analysis of these newsletters is conducted according to "who" the articles were about, "what" the articles were about, and the predominant time orientation—the("when") of the article (Miller et al., 1987). Eleven issues were examined covering a 10 month period. Examination of organizational newsletters was only possible after the intervention because newsletters were created as a direct result of the new effort to increase communication in the organization.

First, regarding "who" the stories were about, most of the articles concentrated on individual employees and their accomplishments (i.e., retirements, employees contributions, and future plans). In addition, each newsletter included a column named "New Faces, New Places" that welcomed all the new employees and introduced them to the rest of the organization. In addition, several articles provided information of interest to employees (e.g., hunting news, environmental concerns, information on upcoming functions and community events). Finally, about half of the articles in the newsletter contained important information concerning the organization. These articles discussed the following topics: goals and direction of each division, response from the public, new plans to improve the function of different sections, safety news, new technology news (i.e., the new computer system), and information on seminars and classes sponsored by the organization for the employees. The predominant time orientation of the newsletters was the present and the future. Very few articles discussed the past and those that did provided some historical information necessary to understand a current event.

In addition to the newsletters, other artifacts and rituals deserve special attention because their function served to demonstrate to the employees that the organization cared about them as individuals and appreciated their contributions. The "First Annual Employee Recognition Dinner" was held "to honor all employees" and to thank them for their dedication to their jobs. Retiring employees and recipients of departmental awards were specifically recognized. Another social function, which further proved to employees that this organization valued their contribution, was the "Annual Equipment Road-e-o." During this event employees had the chance to demonstrate their skill in running their equipment and everyone had the opportunity to socialize at the workplace.

Organizational communication artifacts and rituals do appear to provide a reflection of the organization's culture. This culture had become one characterized by employee involvement, attention to the needs of the individual, and commitment to sharing information at all levels. Any type of cultural analysis requires that an examination be made not just of the artifacts and rituals, but of the meaning cultural members ascribe to them. Interviews following the intervention indicate that employees repeatedly mentioned the recognition dinner, newsletter, and "Road-e-o" as examples of "proof" that management was really committed to the new spirit of greater openness. Many mentioned these as generous expressions of management's appreciation. Perceptions of change from public officials and customers represent additional evidence that these artifacts and rituals do represent a genuine change in the culture of the organization.

Perceptions of Change From Public Officials and the Public

Goldhaber (1986) argues that to evaluate cultural change in an organization, one needs to interview the public that the organization serves, as well as other agents who come in direct contact with the organization. This task was especially challenging in this organization because of its diverse functions. Letters recently received by the organization were examined. Comparison with preintervention letters was impossible because the organization did not keep accessible records. Members of the elected governing board of this organization were also interviewed to assess their perceptions of changes in the organization. These data sources reveal additional evidence that this organization's culture had changed.

In 62 customer comment cards reviewed, there were 53 positive comments and 9 negative ones. Some of those positive comments included the following: "best visit I have ever made to the [organization]," "what a breath of fresh air compared to years past," "lot better than before," "your new processing system is very efficient and pleasant," "everyone is very helpful and a pleasure to work with," "everyone was very helpful and responsive to the needs of myself and my clients," "I have never had better support," "the information and cooperation were much appreciated," "excellent," "a marvelous improvement over a year ago," "this was real different from my previous visits," "Hooray for the changes! Super!," and "a great improvement from past years." Negative comments included the following: "too many delays," "permits are too expensive," "make cashier location easier to find with a sign," "I found the smoke in the building very uncomfortable."

Public officials interviewed stated that there had been significant changes in the organization since before the intervention. They stated that at first there was a reluctance on the part of employees because they expected immediate results. Changes did not happen over night. Public officials stated that employee behavior had changed significantly but employee awareness of that change may not have occurred as rapidly. Changes happened over a long time and were gradual. Because of this, employees may not have been consciously aware of them. One public official gave an example: "When I talked to [_____], who has been with this organization for 20 years, he said, 'I don't believe in any of this stuff. I am a dinosaur. This stuff will never work.' But when I saw him working with his people he was honest, straightforward, consistent. There have been changes, but it's hard for some people to admit them."

Public officials felt that someone needed to keep the organization on track, "to make sure that the system is passed on; to pass on the principles of communication and flexibility." Other changes noticed by public officials were the fact that road crews were now allowed to come into the central building, which is something they were not allowed to do before. Also, women started getting hired in the regular crews. Public officials suggested that future programs should concentrate on the supervisory level, which was most threatened by this change. They felt that new people hired or promoted to the supervisory level needed to have "people skills" not only seniority or technical knowledge. They felt that just the fact that employees could accept this new hiring practice was a sign that things had significantly improved.

Pre- and Postintervention Statistics

Bennis (1969) contends that most researchers who attempt to evaluate change concentrate almost exclusively on attitudinal and subjective factors. "Hard" behavioral variables (i.e., absentee rates, sickness and accident rates, productivity, and cost reduction) need to be investigated. For the purpose of assessing change in this organization, two factors were compared—sick leave and total cost of sick leave for the organization. Two different years were chosen for comparison—the year before the intervention started, and the year the intervention ended. As reported by the organization, the year prior to the intervention this organization employed 311 employees. These employees took 35,209.6 hours of sick leave, which cost the organization $349,965.70. The year following the intervention the 322 employees in the organization took 23,930.1 hours of sick leave, which cost the organization $254,101.21. During this two-year period, although the work force grew by 11 people, there

was a decrease in sick leave of 11,279.5 hours and a decrease in cost of $95,864.49.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study suggest that organizational cultures can be managed, and that this change may have a positive impact on employee morale and the quality of service provided to customers. The organization examined in this project shifted its culture toward greater participation and involvement. Organizational members reported that where they once felt isolated and ignored, they now believed that their ideas and suggestions were valued. Authority and responsibility for decision making shifted from a few managers at the top of the organization to many employees at all levels. Every level in the organization was asked for input in decisions that affected their jobs. Communication among all work levels improved dramatically. Information flow increased to employees at every level and function. As a result, organizational members felt more involved in the organization, and employee job satisfaction increased.

Organizational members of all levels and divisions learned skills in active listening, giving and receiving praise and criticism, raising difficult issues, and clarifying misunderstandings. This increase in communication among the different levels and sections allowed the organization to function more effectively and acquire a congruent vision. Employees felt a part of the organization because they received much more information about decisions made and other events that might affect their organizational lives.

One may wonder if the observed changes will last. Postintervention results were collected 6 months to 1 year after the intervention had ended. This makes it unlikely that employees changed their behavior in expected ways simply because they were under observation. The interval between the end of the intervention and the postintervention data collection phase suggests that change in this organization had been maintained.

Statistical analyses, for all work categories combined, offer further support for the argument that this organization had shifted toward greater participation and involvement. The entire organization improved significantly in the perception of information flow, involvement, meetings, and morale. It appears that even though some employees still had problems and gripes with their specific supervisor or the individuals they worked with, they felt that this organization was committed to providing a positive working environment. Based on specific subscale items, employees felt that they had an effective and productive working relationship with management, were

motivated to put out their best efforts, were respected by their organization, and were treated in a fair and consistent manner in an atmosphere of trust. Organizational members agreed that management showed concern for them as individuals, valued their hard work, and invited their input in decision making. Employees of all divisions agreed that after the changes that took place as a result of the intervention, this organization was a good place to work.

The two categories that did not show significant differences from Time 1 to Time 2 are teamwork and supervision. These findings are not surprising. Interviews indicated that some divisions worked as a team and were very satisfied with their supervision, whereas members of other divisions were competing with each other and were unhappy with their supervisor. After the intervention, many supervisors asked for their employees' input and praised them for work well done. Other supervisors were still secretive, punishing, inconsistent, and authoritarian. So, although the dominant culture moved toward increased levels of participation, there were still subcultures of resistant supervisors managing in a more authoritarian mode.

Supervision was the one dimension that correlated highly with every other dimension. When employees were satisfied with their supervisor, they were also satisfied with the other dimensions. If we accept that supervision has a strong effect on the other dimensions, it seems that a subsequent intervention should concentrate on eliciting greater supervisor support for the involvement program. Glaser and Glaser (1987) suggest that a major reason why involvement programs fail is that midlevel managers feel left out and alienated by the process. They are the ones that lose power as they are asked to give up their main function in the organization: making decisions. Glaser and Glaser (1987) propose that for an employee involvement program to be successful, involving middle managers in the initial phases of the program is essential.

Because this study deals with one organization, we must question the generalizability of the results. In addition, because the study did not include a control group and the intervention took two years to be completed, we need to consider whether the culture of this organization changed in response to the intervention and not due to some other uncontrolled set of variables. By all reports, this organization had been a generally static, predictable one over a 15-20 year period. During that time, management had not changed and neither had management philosophy. The most dramatic, long-term event to touch this department was the intervention described in this article. The reports of employees, managers, and board members indicate that the changes materialized as a direct result of the intervention.

Future research should investigate which aspects of the intervention program were most helpful in changing the culture of the organization. To achieve reliable results, a control group must be used. Unfortunately, this sort of design is very difficult to achieve in organizational research because of the constraints placed on the researcher by the organization. Even so, examining groups under different conditions would allow researchers to draw conclusions about where to concentrate their change efforts.

This study was the first empirical project to measure organizational culture change as a result of a communication-based intervention. It employed a triangulation approach by combining questionnaires, interviews, and direct observation. The aspects of the intervention that seemed to have the greatest impact on the culture were communication skills training for the entire organization, involvement in decision making, and the establishment of task teams. Findings suggest that organizational cultures can be managed.

Implications for Practice

This study has important implications for management practice. Because culture is created through communication and social interaction, to move an organization's culture toward greater participation requires a change in communication practices and interaction rituals. This research offers managers five cultural dimensions created through communication: teamwork, morale, supervision, involvement, and information flow.

To achieve change in organizational members' shared perceptions of culture, managers can target these dimensions. For example, managers can institute a team structure throughout the organization, including an executive management team, division management teams, cross-functional teams, and work unit teams. The goal is to give individuals across the organization the opportunity to join together to mutually resolve problems, improve work processes, and make decisions that affect their work.

To successfully achieve this team structure requires strong, fundamental communication skills and competencies. This calls for the development of learning modules to teach managers and supervisors a range of participative leadership skills, from managing conflict to collaboratively solving problems and leading meetings where all members participate.

Another key implication for management is the vital role of information flow in the shared perceptions of an organization's culture. To create a culture that is perceived as involved, participative, and open requires the development of practices and rituals that expand the flow of information throughout the organization. This study has shown the value of such channels as a company newsletter and the posting of management meeting minutes.

The critical role of first-line supervisors is another important implication from this study. It is critical that supervisors be engaged early in any effort to lead an organization's culture toward heightened levels of involvement and participation.

The results of this study suggest that if an organization can involve its employees, establish communication competencies at all levels, and increase information flow, it can move its culture toward greater participation and involvement. The results also support the position that organizational cultures are transformed through communication. This implies that the study of organizational culture change should focus on communication variables to push forward the frontiers of knowledge and professional practice in an area that is of great consequence and concern to researchers, managers, and employees alike.

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Sonia Zamanou is an assistant professor of organizational communication at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. She obtained her B.A. (psychology) from the University of Maryland, her M.A. (communication) from the University of Florida, and her M.S. (counseling psychology) and Ph.D. (organizational communication) from the University of Oregon. She is currently conducting research on organizational culture, cultural diversity, and organization development.

Susan R. Glaser is a professor in the College of Business Administration at the University of Oregon. She received her B.A. (education), M.S. and Ph.D. (communication) from Pennsylvania State University. She is currently conducting research on team development and organizational culture.