

## CULTURE? *Muscle Memory or DNA*

Company Culture is a very powerful attribute that defines your organization and your face to the customer and it can stem and morph from simple decisions typically made in the early days of your organization.

Culture is something that germinates from a seed of a single individual. It happens without even without you knowing that it is happening and over time it will modify, expand.

As an individual you have your own moral compass and when you meet someone during the introductory phase you are actually comparing and assessing your comparative emotional attributes and if they synchronize you will most likely spend more time together ... but combined you now have an internal culture. This culture will likely have attributes of intuition or with couples you ultimately can finish each other's sentences ...

In business, culture germinated from the initial founder and has slowly spread and expanded within the organization as the organization has grown and expanded. This culture is not something that has been typically been engineered from the start but may later be modified through Strategic Planning or the launch of a published list of an organization's aspirations and beliefs ... often quoted but not always followed but at least it looks good to the public.

In the majority of situations culture has evolved from the decisions made regarding the operating software you have selected and of course Policies and Procedures.

Unfortunately in many cases companies will modify their processes to satisfy the requirements of the software. So in this case you have delegated your culture definition to some software engineer who has no clue about your business or your beliefs. This then becomes further complicated as you roll-out deployment and you make decisions about information retention and storage destinations ... some seem simple but can have lasting repercussions. Your Organizational DNA has now been defined !!! For example, at a company that I was working a huge debate was waged about whether wire should/would be included within our Bill of Materials (BOM). Wire was a variable component and difficult to quantify but it was a significant cost element of our overall product cost ... Ultimately the decision was made to exclude wire since it would require resources greater than the product value to manage in the terms of inventory accuracy, ability to count and ultimately control the final consumption ... but our Organizational DNA was established that wire would be considered as an overhead consumable. But, it did not end there ... we then had to decide if in our BOM wire would be classified as for example 18 gauge Nomex or Nomex 18 gauge? Another DNA moniker due to the naming Conventions that would be used and ultimately potentially Morph into an acronym. Acronyms ultimately becomes the secret language unique to your organization.

But the Organizational DNA foot-print expands through the Deployment of Policies and Procedures. I admit many of these Policies and Procedures are put in place to support Regulatory Compliance ... but others operate as distributed accountability.

Where Lean Thoughts can become Reality

## PERFECT PROCESS - Have you achieved it?

The role of Policies & Procedures to support Regulatory Requirements should be considered as a tool to operate like an alarm clock to brains of the individuals in the organization. If it is regulatory, in essence the requirements should be intuitive as the right thing to do ... but random review does serve the purpose to refresh or bring the concerns to top-of-mind.

The other key purpose of Policies & Procedures is to as a communicator and guidance from the Leadership to all employees on acceptable behaviors or response. Which if not followed may result in dire consequences to the employee. Hence why we often advocate are you creating an organization of "Employee's" where they are programmed to follow the rules exactly or do you have a group of "Owners" that us the policies as a guide and you trust them to make the correct decision?

We have all been victims during life of these Organizational DNA ... Like being at IKEA where they will not allow you to use a credit card unless it has a signature on the back ... even if you sign it in front of them ... not sure what this policy is meant to protect ... but it seems silly ... or going to the farm where we get our supply of Eggs and the farmer does not keep track of my payment history instead just reminding me that my personal moral compass will be a better book-keeper than his software.

Of course, how many of us have stood at a cash register while our "Face of the Organization" struggles to complete a transaction because the software has not been programmed for it ... a quick call for a supervisor typically results with the Supervisor either knowing the secret sequence of key-strokes to make it happen or has the experience on how to "fool" the system to be able to complete the transaction. Often, a big part of Organizational DNA revolves around those that know how to best fool the software.

Pause and reflect on the attributes of your Organizational DNA and is it generating the operating style, and resulting behaviors you really want your organization to emit? Ultimately your Organizational DNA defines your brand ... which is your most important asset.

During the actual execution of tasks "Muscle Memory" may appear as part of your organizational DNA but it really is an individual attribute. Muscle Memory is created by doing a task repetitively for an extended period of time until it appears to be smooth and natural. This does not mean that it is perfect, it just means that it has been practiced over and over. A good example would be your barista at Star Bucks where the Organizational DNA has defined that customers should be able to enjoy a good coffee prepared from a premium blend of beans ... but that actual presentation to you is performed by the Barista ... who then becomes the face of the organization to you and a reflection of the Organizational DNA.

Peer pressure and the competitive nature to achieve perfection between the Baristas just amplifies the Image and capability of the Organization which ultimately amps up the view to the consumer which becomes identified as being the Corporate Culture.

Corporate Culture starts from well the well intentioned moral compass of the founders but can either be amplified or tainted through employee actions related to software process compliance or the consequences resulting from Policies and Procedures. Indeed many readers will draw my attention that to insure consistency many companies have embraced compliance to ISO standards to insure standardization across the organization.

However, you need to weigh and observe the consequences and have you provided enough latitude to trust individual decision making to do the right thing and ultimately help you define your culture.

A good example is to compare the cultures that exist within Fed-Ex and UPS ... both are good and provide a similar service but do have 2 very distinct different cultures ... which one would you want to mimic?

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