

# PEOPLE CENTERED ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN RESPONSE TO CHANGES CAUSED BY COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**Kerwin Jose Chavez Vera, Universidad Señor de Sipan  
Africa Calanchez Urribarri, Universidad Señor de Sipan**

## ABSTRACT

*This article has the purpose to reflect on the relevance of establish a people centered organizational culture in response to changes caused by COVID 19 Pandemic. A bibliographic analysis was developed reviewing theoretical aspects related to the subject studied, performing a procedure that includes analysis-synthesis-proposal. The results derived from the study made possible to identify the main elements that should be considered in companies in order to adjust the organizational culture to the current context, propitiating an assertive communication, the collaboration between team members, flexibility and promoting the redefinition and socialization of the company's objectives and strategies, creating an integral network that goes beyond the physical facilities and is part of the collaborators.*

**Keywords:** Organizational Culture, Flexibilization, COVID 19.

## INTRODUCTION

Worldwide society, as a consequence of the pandemic, experiences a series of changes at accelerated rates, for which it was not prepared, these have not only affected personally, but it also significantly influences organizations. These ones aren't being trained for it and quickly required a transformation process that allows them to adapt to the context in order to continue meeting their objectives.

This transformation process in companies requires the adoption of a new organizational culture. This cultural change must be adjusted to new ways of working, which require being more flexible and adaptive to the environmental situations, thus becoming the impetus for business growth and also achieve success in the middle of a complicated context such as the present time marked by the COVID 10 Pandemic.

In time of crisis, like the current one, companies have two alternatives; they can remain unchanged, trying to resist changes in the environment or apply a series of variations that allow them to adapt effectively, these must not only consider strategic aspects, otherwise all organizational levels, gestating a total transformation of the company. This business innovation must include interactive elements that are shared by employees. The current trend of organizations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic is oriented to the search, not only of profitability, but of permanence and future expansion of the business, framed in an organizational vision and in the culture changes that allow them to achieve this purpose.

In line with what has been described, it is convenient to review the approach of Daft (2019) for who culture is the set of values, beliefs, knowledge, as well as ways of thinking that will guide the behavior of the company's collaborators. Culture generally goes unnoticed and its power has been evidenced only when companies try to implement new strategies contrary to

existing ones, providing workers with a sense of organizational identify, which triggers a marked commitment to its beliefs and values.

The COVID-19 pandemic leads all organizations to question the possibility of changing their culture, understanding that they face such a variable and uncertain environment, for this question Davis & Newstrom (2006) answer that if it is possible to make this change, for this assertion they are based on findings obtained in previous research carried out in different companies, they clarify that a long-term effort is required, in addition to a period between five and ten years to establish a cultural change as long as the companies have the support and strong commitment of senior management.

On the other hand, for Helleriegel & Slocum (2009) change in organizational culture is possible, however, when the values considered essentials are deeply rooted in the culture of organizations, they are hardly susceptible to changes, so it is more effective and it makes more sense to focus efforts on changing existing ineffective behaviors and procedures in the organization.

From the authors' point of view, the possibility of cultural changes in organizations is evident when the objectives are reconsidered, of course this is a highly complex and difficult task, so efforts to achieve it must be systematically planned considering all factors. In this sense the aforementioned authors propose some elements necessary to implement a change in the organizational culture and make it respond to the complex scenarios that the company faces today: it is necessary to understand the previous culture; as well as providing support to the employees with ideas for a better culture, it is also important to find the most effective subculture.

The authors also point out that the current culture shouldn't be attacked head on, it is also important consider the vision of a new culture as a guiding principle, not as a producer of miracles. Recognize that it is a long-term task. Living the new culture, highlighting the fact that actions speak louder than words, and they are important aspects and considerations if a cultural change is required. This article has the purpose to reflect about the relevance of establishing a people centered organizational culture in response to the changes caused by the COVID 19 Pandemic.

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

### Organizational Culture

Culture is undoubtedly a highly complex concept that has evolved over the years, depending on the same evolution of society and prevailing lifestyles. To review the evolution of the term, Vargas (2007) is taken into account for whom the concept of culture throughout history has had many variations, to reflect on the correctness of this statement it is worth thinking that it is a term referred to the human activity and the infinite complexity of humanity is widely accepted. The author himself indicates that the evolution of the concept is directly related to the conceptualization that man is and what his essence is.

Is widely accepted the fact that culture is a complex phenomenon inherent to the society, which affects it directly, demonstrating itself in the way its members act, a large number of authors have dedicated themselves to its study, coining terms such as Organizational Culture, Culture Corporate or Organizational Culture, to explain, among other things, the communications and ways of acting of people within organizations, for the purposes of this study are considered as synonyms.

For Daft (2019) the Organizational Culture is composed of knowledge, values, beliefs and even ways of thinking, which are used to guide the performance of the members, which are shared by the members of an organization and they are taught to all members as the correct one. In accordance with the previous concept, Alcover et al. (2012) propose that organizational culture is defined as the set of values, beliefs and assumptions deeply rooted in the members of the organization; they are taken for granted and shared. They complement the concept by stating that it forms an underlying structure of permanent meanings over time and that determinates the perception and interpretation of events, as well as people's behavior.

In view of the complexity of the variable and the importance that has been dedicated to its study, it is convenient to review other definitions; in this sense Gasalla (2011) conceives the organizational culture as one of the four basic pillars of the organization together with the strategy, processes and people. In its definition it contemplates it as a way of being, of perceiving and perceiving oneself, a way of expressing oneself and even of being creative within the dimensions of the organization.

A relevant aspect of this definition is the inclusion of the emotional aspect and the weight that is given to it at an organizational level and from the point of view of people. In the organizational sphere, it is considered a fundamental pillar, they even make the symbolic analogy that culture represents one of the four legs of a chair in organizations, on the other hand, in terms of people is perceived with so much power that it is able to determine or at least influence the way of being of people.

One of the most representative authors in the study of organizational culture is (Schein, 1988). For this author, who reinforces the definition previously described, organizational culture refers to the set of values, needs, expectations, beliefs, policies, as well as the norms accepted and practiced in organizations.

## **Objectives of the Organizational Culture**

For Daft (2019), the organizational culture provides to the members of the company with the possibility of developing a sense of organizational identity, in addition, it generates a commitment to the beliefs and values accepted in the organization. In his explanation, he posits that the emergence of culture in organizations is given by the will of a founder or pioneer leader who articulates a series of ideas and implants them within the company in an intentional and organized way reflected in many cases in the mission, vision, values and philosophy of the organization when these are successful, in terms of favoring the achievement of objectives, the integration of workers and the development in them of a sense of identity, then they are institutionalized and become permanent in the time (Tejada & Arias, 2005).

Another purpose that Daft (2019) attributes to organizational culture is to help organizations to adapt to the external context, it is the way the organization meets the established goals and deals with outsiders, customers, suppliers and even competitors...Such is the influence assigned to the culture of the organization, which it even considers can serve as a guide in the decision making of workers, in cases where there are no written rules or policies.

In the same order of ideas, Hellriegel & Slocum (2009) assume that the culture of organizations and their effectiveness are directly related, they argue that well developed cultures are a distinctive characteristic of companies with notable performances. To this they assign the qualifier of strong culture to denote when the majority of managers and workers share it. In addition to performance, efficiency, adaptation, sense of identity and integration, the authors

propose ethics as another of the purposes of organizational culture, in this sense they affirm that a culture that deals with ethical norms supports ethical behavior (Nosnik, 2015).

In line with the above, Hellriegel & Slocum (2009) also establish the reverse relationship, by stating that the presence or absence of ethical behavior in administrative actions influences the prevailing culture. In summary, the authors consider that effective organizational culture, at all times, should stimulate ethical conduct in the company, from their perspective, they emphatically affirm that it should even be recognized that ethical conduct in some cases may involve financial costs to the organization and in these circumstances, it is ethics that must prevail, above financial costs (Siliceo et al., 2011).

### Changes in Organizational Culture

In the organizational field, the question has arisen as to whether it is possible to change culture in organizations, for this question Davis & Newstrom (2006) answer that, it is possible, they are based on findings obtained in previous research carried out in different companies, they clarify that a long-term effort is required, it takes between five and ten years to establish a cultural change as long as there is the support and decided commitment of senior management. As already mentioned, it is possible to make change processes in organizational culture, even Davis & Newstrom (2006) themselves list eight frequently used methods for organizational culture change and classify them according to their probable effectiveness:

1. Support communication from Senior Management
2. Employee training
3. Formulation of declaration of values
4. Remuneration of behaviors
5. Use of anecdotes and myths
6. Public recognition of heroes and heroines
7. Use of slogans
8. Appointment of a culture administrator

The list presents in descending order based on its probable effectiveness. Methods one, two, and three have a “*very high*” probability of success; method four has a “*high*” probability of success, methods five, six, and seven have a “*moderate*” probability of success; and finally, method eight has a “*minimal*” probability of success in the task of changing the organizational culture.

On the other hand, for Hellerriegel & Slocum (2009) change in organizational culture is possible, however, when the values considered fundamental are deeply rooted in the culture of organizations, they are hardly susceptible to changes, so it is more effective and it makes more sense to focus efforts on changing behaviors and ineffective previous procedures in the organization (Rodriguez & Perez, 2017).

Due to the aforementioned, the possibility of cultural changes in organizations is assumed, necessary when the objectives are reconsidered, of course this is a highly complex and difficult task, so the efforts to achieve it must be systematically planned considering all factors. In this sense, Hellerriegel & Slocum (2009) propose seven elements necessary to implement a change in the organizational culture:

1. Understand the previous culture
2. Support employees with ideas for a better culture
3. Finding the most effective subculture

4. Do not attack culture head on
5. Think of the vision of a new culture as a guide, not as the possibility of changing the organization
6. Recognize that it is a long-term task
7. Live the new culture, highlighting the fact that actions speak louder than words

Likewise, the contribution of Thompson & Strickland (2005) is indicated, for whom the problematic culture is very difficult to change due to the heavy anchor of deeply rooted values and habits. They also highlight the need for concerted actions by management over a set period of time to replace a culture or to uproot undesirable cultural obstacles and infuse other ideas that support the strategic objectives of the organization (Garcia, 2006).

To achieve the changes according to Thompson & Strickland (2005), it is necessary to implement notorious and energetic measures to change the culture, among which they mention the following:

1. Review policies and procedures to help promote cultural change.
2. Modify pay incentives to reward desired cultural behavior.
3. Praise and give public recognition to people who exhibit the new cultural traits.
4. Recruit and hire new managers and employees who have desired cultural values and can serve as an example.
5. Change key managers and employees ingrained in today's culture.
6. Take advantage of every opportunity to communicate to employees the foundations of cultural change.

For cultural change in organizations, Thompson & Strickland (2005) explain two kinds of acts; those are symbolic and substantive acts. Respect to the first ones, they affirm that they are more value for the signals that they transmit about the expected behaviors and performance, those that are carried out by senior executives to serve as an example of the rest of the workers, some examples are: leading reduction efforts costs and restrict the privileges of executives, if what is desired is to introduce the principle of cost reduction into the culture of the organization. Another example, is in the case that it is desired to broaden the orientation of workers towards clients; the act would be to urge all workers at all hierarchical levels to dedicate a considerable part of their time to speak with clients and understand their needs. Another type of symbolic act is the recognition that organizations make to workers that exemplify what is required by the new culture (Villalba, 2010).

The importance that Thompson & Strickland (2005) give to the substantive acts to the cultural change is based on the fact that the implementers of the change must convince all the actors that the proposed change in the organizational culture goes further and doesn't remain only cosmetic. The actions to apply must demonstrate the commitment not only of the employees, also of the managers, some examples are: the change of operating policies; implement reorganization measures; relate the remuneration incentives to the new desirable forms of action; make budget reallocations to projects that support the new culture.

The success of companies in times of pandemic will depend on the ability to respond suitably to the changes and the challenges that the environment presents. The organizational culture allows unify the formal and informal aspects that the members of an organization have in common with, defining not only the character, also the personality of the organization manifesting itself in the achievement of the objectives. Actually, a sufficiently flexible organizational culture is required, as well as the ability to adapt to the environment and respond to situations that can prevent optimal company performance.

## **Methological Aspects**

According to the purpose of the research, which consisted of reflecting on the relevance of establishing an Organizational Culture Centered on People in response to the changes caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic; a documentary- bibliographic review was carried out. For, Hernandez & Mendoza (2018) this type of research seeks to obtain, select, organize, interpret, collect and analyze information related to the question under study from documentary sources. These sources can be of various types, such as books, audiovisual records, newspaper clippings, reports, published scientific articles, degree theses, among others.

In order to obtain sources of information as indicated by the documentary research, the primary sources were consulted made up of: authors who study Organizational Culture Hernandez & Mendoza (2018) of which three documents were selected as units of analysis, taking as inclusion criteria, in addition to their originality and credibility, the coincidences in the keywords related to the research topic.

The research method applied to information sources was the content analysis method, this is the method of studying and analysis relationships in a systematic way. Most experts believe that content analysis is a research method used to express concepts or words in text or a set of texts (Rodriguez & Perez, 2017).

## **Final Thoughts: People-Centered Organizational Culture**

At present times, companies require as a consequence of COVID 19, adjust to new measures and protocols that include remote work, teleworking or home office, which implies working outside the company. It is essential to be able to do exactly the same work as in a classic office. At the same time, teleworking is not limited to jobs based on ITC and perhaps the first telecommunicating jobs were anything using technology. However, the significant growth and development of information technology, especially the internet (Interamerican Development Bank, 2020).

But changes in working conditions are not limited only and exclusively on physical aspects, but the interactions and coordinations of people who are members of the team work must be considered, which can vary from collaborators who are independent to highly interdependent that constantly require the guidance and instructions of their superiors.

Spite of the circumstances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, companies can achieve its objectives by promoting changes in the organizational culture by promoting one that is inclined to promote and value the autonomy of employees, individual action and competition between them. But at the same time, emphasizing integration, relationship management and coordination of the group's effort (DuBrin, 2018).

The organizational culture in a pandemic must emphasize flexibility not only in functions, but also in schedules and processes, adaptability to changes and situations of the context, and receptivity to constant change. All this is not possible if the company promotes adherence to norms and rules, either can be considered control structures based on seniority or hierarchy.

## **CONCLUSION**

A new organizational culture must favor and prioritize innovation, openness to changes, as well as diversification in forms and the processes. Therefore, a redefinition of strategies, plans

and objectives is required to enface the crisis resulting from COVID-19, but above all to achieve the commitment of the collaborators with the new challenges, which requires the socialization of the changes brought about in the company. In addition, to establish permanent and fluid communication channels. In the same way, in spite of how difficult it may seem, the company must strengthen team work and collaboration, with which a relationship of greater integration is fostered.

In conclusion, in order to achieve their objectives in a pandemic, companies must promote a culture centered on people, giving to the employees a central role in which their ideas, opinions and suggestions are increasingly relevant and significant, therefore, it should be redefined the role and participation of employees as agents that guarantee organizational success.

## REFERENCES

- Alcover, C., Martínez, D., Rodríguez, F., & Domínguez, R. (2012). *Introduction to work psychology*. Mc Graw Hill. España.
- Interamerican Development Bank. (2020). *Answers to COVID-19 from science, innovation and productive development*. New York: IBD.
- Daft, R. (2019). *Theory and Organizational Design*. 15<sup>th</sup>. Edition. International Thomson editors. Mexico.
- Davis, K., & Newstrom, J. (2006). *Human Behavior at work*. McGraw-Hill. Mexico.
- DuBrin, A. (2018). *Fundamentals of Organization Behavior*. International Thomson Editors. Mexico.
- Garcia, C. (2006). An approach to the concept of Organizational Culture. *Universitas Psychologica Magazine*. Pontifical Javeriana University. Colombia. DOI <https://doi.org/10.11144/Javeriana.upsy15-2.upci>
- Gasalla, J. (2011). *The New People Management. Paradoxical Framework of Managerial Talent*. Pyramid Editions. Spain.
- Helleriege, D., & Slocum, J. (2009). *Organizational Behavior*. International Thomson Editors. Mexico.
- Hernandez, R., & Mendoza, C. (2018). *Research Methodology: quantitative, qualitative and mixed routes*. Mexico City: McGraw-Hill Interamerican Editors, Co.
- Nosnik, A. (2015). *Organizational Cultures: Origins, Consolidation and Development*. Editorial Netbiblo. Spain.
- Rodriguez, A., & Perez, A. (2017). Scientific Methods of inquiry and construction of knowledge . *Magazine School of Business Administration*, 82, 175-195.
- Schein, E. (1988). *The Business Culture and Leadership: A dynamic vision*. Plaza & Janes. Spain.
- Siliceo, A., Casares, D., & Gonzalez, J. (2011). *Leadership, Values and Organizational Culture. Towards a competitive organization*. Mc Graw Hill Interamerican Editors. Mexico.
- Tejada, J., & Arias, F. (2005). *Organizational Practices and worker's Commitment to the Organization*. Journal of Teaching and Research in Psychology. Veracruz University. Mexico.
- Thompson, A., & Strickland, A. (2005). *Strategic Management*. Mc Graw Hill. Mexico.
- Vargas, J. (2007). *The Organizational Culturocracy in Mexico*. Electronic. Edition.
- Villalba, O. (2010). Increased satisfaction and Organizational Commitment of Employees through effective Leadership. *Latin American Journal of Administration*. Colombia.

**Received:** 20-Nov-2021, Manuscript No. AAFSJ-21-9919; **Editor assigned:** 23-Nov-2021, PreQC No. AAFSJ-21-9919(PQ); **Reviewed:** 07-Dec-2021, QC No. AAFSJ-21-9919; **Revised:** 12-Apr-2022, Manuscript No. AAFSJ-21-9919(R); **Published:** 19-Apr-2022