

WHAT IS A “CULTURAL PROGRAM” AND HOW TO PROGRAM “COLLECTIVE MIND” WITHIN ORGANIZATION? (Modelling of Ethical and Sensing Codes of Organizational Culture)

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Abstract

The article discusses typological model of ethical and sensing codes of organizational culture, which presents additional interpretation of the results of order diagnostics of organizational culture and establishes a relationship between the state of organizational culture and the organizational task that the enterprise is solving. The article proposes definitions of the following concepts: “ethical and sensing system of organizational culture”, “ethical and sensing matrix of culture”, “ethical and sensing code” and “ethical and sensing program of culture”.

Key words: organizational culture, order approach, ethical and sensing system, ethical and sensing code, cultural program.

Introduction

There is a metaphorical definition of organizational culture given by Gerard Hofstede. In this definition, the Dutch social psychologist compares culture with a computer program and emphasizes the “programming” function of organizational culture in relation to employees of an enterprise: due to the presence of culture, its employees think and behave in a similar way with respect to significant parameters of organization activity.

How does this “programming mechanism” work? Obviously, we are talking about some functioning patterns of the human psyche, which could be identified and

explained by psychological science. As the phenomenon of organizational culture does not often become the object of fundamental research in psychology, the process of immersion in the depths of mental and psychological phenomena does not stop.

One of the promising trends in the study of psychological mechanisms of functioning and changes in organizational culture is the trend at the intersection of thematic fields of many psychological sciences. It is a psychological study of the phenomenon of sense. A.N. Zankovsky was the first to conduct this kind of research in the field of organizational psychology in Russia (1996). Over the recent years K. Weick's works on this topic have been of great interest (1995; 2015).

Similarly, a lot of attention has been paid to the sensing system in the order approach to organizational culture's socio-psychological study and changes. Subsystem of ethical senses is one of the subsystems of the sensing system which is responsible for fundamental and functional self-determination of an organization and an individual within. It is currently the focus of order research.

The purpose of the article is to present the empirical model of ethical and sensing codes of organizational culture and their characteristics.

Definition of concepts

A number of concepts used within order approach will be defined below.

Ethical and sensing subsystem of the cultural (organizational and cultural) system is a network of meanings constituted or attributed by the interaction participants to standard and new elements of the life current. This network of meanings creates a subjective group cultural reality. The ethical component of meanings is associated with the influence of basic ethical senses on the process of making decisions about the meaning (sense) of a particular phenomenon (action, deed, situation).

The decision to attribute a certain meaning to the phenomenon under interpretation is determined by the level of development of leadership characteristics of the leader, which is connected to ethical and sensing subsystem both in terms of

functional ethical senses and basic ethical senses. These two parameters (level of leadership qualities development and two parts of the ethical and sensing subsystem) determine the overall structure of the ethical and sensing system of culture. We distinguished six levels of leadership qualities' development, which correlate with functional and basic ethical senses. The basis for distinguishing levels of leadership qualities development was established using Lao Tzu's modified assertion regarding the “best” ruler and other types of leaders deviating from the “best” leader.

Ethical and sensing matrix is basic ethical senses proper; they form the basis of ethical and sensing subsystem and have their own system characteristics (structure, levels, elements, functions). The ethical and sensing matrix includes four pairs of fundamental senses represented by semantic binary oppositions (semantic dyads), i.e. life - death, cooperation - struggle, improvement - deterioration, responsibility - irresponsibility. The first dyad (life - death) is correlated with the “family” suborder in the order model of organizational culture (the main value is a person), the second dyad (cooperation - struggle) is correlated with the “army” suborder (the main value is the goal and result) and the third dyad (improvement - deterioration) is correlated with the “church” sub-order (the main value is Idea, Ideal). The last dyad (responsibility - irresponsibility) is an integral characteristic and the result of ethical-sensing choices made by a person or a group under various life and professional circumstances. The criterion for responsible choice is the orientation towards caring for the interests of the Whole.

Ethical culture code (ethical-sensing culture code) is defined as specific stable features of the ethical-sensing matrix's functioning within a particular culture (individual, group, organization, ethnic group, denomination, historical era). There are two types of ethical-sensing coding of organizational culture:

1) *ethical-sensing culture code (basic level)*. To write this code we use letters. Every word denoting basic ethical meaning in the four pairs of ethical-sensing oppositions starts with the capital letter.

2) *ethical-sensing code of organizational culture (functional level)* is a combination of three suborder characteristics of organizational culture, i.e. “family” (F) “army” (A) and “church” (C), which have been obtained as a result of data generalization regarding all six order techniques. The order of letters in the code characterizes the degree of manifestation and maturity of organizational culture suborders together with other techniques’ data. The code corresponds with functional ethical senses and, therefore, presents the “surface” layer of the ethical-sensing subsystem as opposed to the “deep” (basic) layer.

Ethical (ethical-sensing) programme of culture (culture programme) is a combination of substantial, structural and dynamic characteristics of culture. In terms of content, we are talking about the principles and basic principles of culture.

Let us give two examples. The first example is the result of order analysis of ancient culture of the Cicero era. The following ideals / ideas / provisions form the basis of Cicero’s *ethical-sensing program*: 1) gods exist and people are created by them; 2) gods and people have common nature. The basis of our similarity is Reason, which allows us to distinguish between the good and the evil; 3) gods and people have similar qualities/abilities and, accordingly, similar tasks, which are: a) to create (establish new orders); b) to manage the existing ones. Our essential "divine" characteristics and the human "leading activity" are to create and manage on the basis of distinguishing between the good and the evil; 4) the cause and purpose of such activities of gods and people is to care about the Whole and its parts, which are as follows: Cosmos (taken care of by the gods), City (taken care of by gods and people), people (taken care of by gods and people), gods (taken care of by people, who use “proper veneration of God”). People, like children, try to help their “parents” to the best of their ability with their “adult” concerns [1].

The second example is the description of vision presented by the Japanese corporation called “Sony” (1950), where ideals/ideas /provisions are formulated via organizational and cultural terms: “1) key ideology: the rise of Japanese culture and national status, being pioneers, going one’s own way, striving to achieve the

impossible; 2) key values: to respect and promote creativity and abilities of every person; 3) mission: to experience the joy of innovation and application of technology for the benefit and joy of the society; 4) imaginary future: to become a company, which is best known for changing the poor quality image of Japanese products; 5) live description: we will create products that will become world-famous ... We will be the first Japanese company to enter the US market and build a distribution network in the USA. We will succeed in areas (for example, transistor radio production), where American companies have failed ... Fifty years later, our brand will become one of the most famous brands on the planet ... and will represent innovation and quality worthy of the most innovative companies ... "Made in Japan "will become a symbol of perfection, rather than poor quality [2, p. 277].

Thus, to process the results of order diagnostics of organizational culture, to interpret them and develop actions to change it we use four interrelated concepts: ethical-sensing system/subsystem, ethical-sensing matrix, ethical-sensing code and ethical-sensing programme (“cultural programme”). The latter has both substantive and structural-process characteristics, i.e. can serve as an algorithm of actions to change the state of organizational culture.

Typological model of ethical-sensing cultural codes of an organization

Processing the results of organizational culture diagnostics carried out for Russian enterprises, which had been performed over the period of time from 2009 until 2018, allowed to identify a number of patterns describing the relationship between organizational culture’s order type and the current state of organizational culture in the form of priority task that can be solved.

Let us present the obtained results in the form of the table.

Table 1 Typology of ethical-sensing cultural codes of an organization

№	Ethical-sensing culture code	Interpretation	Problem to be solved by an organization
1.	“A-C-F”	“army-church-family”	Breakthrough under conditions of time deficit
2.	“C-A-F”	“church-army-family”	Breakthrough without time limitations
3.	“C-F-A”	“church-family-army”	Forming “corporate religion”
4.	“F-A-C”	“family-army-church”	Start of activity or its re-start
5.	“F-C-A”	“family-church-army”	Stabilization after a period of extreme activity
6.	“A-F-C”	“army-family-church”	Organization’s survival

We explain the link between various combinations of codes and different types of problems in the following way:

Code “A-C-F” (task: breakthrough under conditions of time deficit). Suborder “army” combined with suborder “church” forms the suborder mix “armed church”. This is a characteristic of goal-oriented and simultaneously ideologically energized employees, who are the fans of their job. Unconditional belief in victory and the desire to obtain a result are accompanied by readiness for almost any victims and are more important than the comfort of a “family” suborder. This variation corresponds with Charles Hand’s project-oriented culture. The code is typical for scientific groups that work with grants, for Special Forces undertaking special-purpose safety measures, research expeditions, etc.

Code “C-A-F” (task: breakthrough without time limitations). The situation is almost similar, but with a slightly different emphasis. The subordinate mix “army of believers” / “believing fighters” is building its own plans, accumulating resources and counting forces for the long term. They are a kind of "crusaders", that are going on a long military trip, inspired by their faith in the idea. These employees are cultural styers that are hardy and stubborn. It is a kind of design culture that can be observed in business corporations (the above-mentioned example of “Sony” with a planning horizon of 50 years, state building examples of the USSR in the past and People’s Republic of China today).

Code “C-F-A” (task: forming “corporate religion”). This is one more combination, which relies upon ideological (“church”) component. Instead of project-oriented thinking they make an emphasis on forming a lifestyle. Achieving the goal is a permanent process of trying to reach an Ideal. The task of building a “corporate religion” (Jesper Kunde) can be illustrated with the examples of Matsushita and his mission of “fighting poverty on earth”, A. Roddick and propaganda of “green” ideology in each of her stores, Merck and the ideal of “preserving and improving human life”, such organizations as Greenpeace, the Red Cross and the Red Crescent and many others where culture, like the culture of religious organizations, is not related to the time factor as a limiter of existence.

Code “F-A-C” (task: start or restart of activity). The initial stage of activity presupposes “manual assembly” of the team, where the leader knows everyone personally and where everyone is a functional continuation of the leader. This is the code of startups where development is based on emotional unity and unanimity. It is a group of good people with a good task. Examples illustrating cases of “restarting” activities were obtained from “old” companies focused on adaptation and re-adaptation under constantly changing conditions. However, they are not going to transform radically due to conservatism and following the principle “a bird in hand is worth two in the bush”.

Code “F-C-A” (task: stabilization after a period of extreme activity). The organization’s culture has this code during the period of relative “rest” after achieving a significant goal (e.g. fulfilling a complex state order and not having the next state order to fulfill). The code is also characteristic of agricultural enterprises, where activity drops are conditioned by seasonality of work.

Code “A-F-C” (task: organization’s survival). The code has been identified in the defense industry complex. The result seems to be paradoxical at first sight, since we are talking about large organizations with state ownership, which are often monopolists in their fields. However, more detailed study of the state of enterprises confirms the correctness of this particular interpretation of the task, faced by an

organization. For example, for some of these enterprises, the issue of survival is the issue of consolidation in their traditional markets under changed management conditions and the issue of returning to previously lost markets, while for others it is constant tension because of the monitoring and rating systems used by superior structures.

Speaking in theoretical terms, we have to identify the task of studying the composition of the ethical-sensing code, not only in terms of the priority of elements included in its composition, but also in terms of connection with the level of development of the leader's leadership qualities (each suborder has a level structure, therefore the code has levels) . Hence, the task of "survival" (like any other of the six tasks described above) can have four levels of solution, each of which has its own ethical and sensing content. The issue of special type of cultural codes, where we can observe numerical equivalence of either two out of three suborders, or all three suborders (the so-called "reference" state) and the tasks that organizations solve in the case of such an "ideal" state of organizational culture is of particular interest.

Practical use of the typological model of ethical-sensing codes

Any diagnostic procedure cannot be complete without an assessment of the investigated condition of the diagnostics object and, in some cases, a forecast. In our case, the result of order diagnostics of organizational culture allows us not only to find out what the organizational culture of the enterprise is and what it is striving for, but also to find out what task the organization is working on. In this case, the cultural (ethical-sensing) code acts as a symptom of the deep process.

Such knowledge allows an organization to increase the awareness of its existence, to understand itself and its condition better. However, presence of a typological model of cultural codes shows more, namely, a certain type of environment for choices and opportunities within which the organization can make decisions about its actions.

Having received information about its condition, the organization's management may ask the following questions: 1) are all departments in the same state? 2) is the detected state optimal or is it necessary to perform “recoding”, “reprogramming” of the cultural code? In the end, an organization must be interested in finding the answer to the question of how to transition from a state of “survival” to a state of active forward movement can be achieved.

Is it possible to make a change in the ethical-sensing code and, thereby, change the state of organizational culture, adjust it in a way that it supports solving a problem significant for organizing a task or achieving a big goal? The answer is yes, it is possible. There is order technology of organizational culture change. New data makes this technology more advanced.

Conclusion

The presence of a typological model of ethical-sensing codes of organizational culture significantly expands the range of tools used by an organization's management and management consultants to solve the problem of changing organizational culture. The answer to the question of how to program a “collective mind” in an organization posed by G. Hofstede certainly has more than one answer (at least for today). The order technology of organizational culture change is one of the solutions, and this solution, while maintaining the essence of the approach unchanged, is open for creative cooperation with the most significant achievements in this area.

References

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